

A
CHILD'S DAY
THROUGH THE AGES

By
Dorothy Margaret Stuart

With Five Full-page Illustrations
and Fifty-five in the text



GEORGE G. HARRAP & CO. LTD.
LONDON TORONTO BOMBAY SYDNEY

First published 1941
by GEORGE G. HARRAP & Co LTD
182 High Holborn, W C 1
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TO
MY COUSINS
ALICIA, LILA, AND JEAN

PREFACE

THOUGH this book is not precisely a sequel to its well-known forerunners, its purpose, like theirs, is to paint an authentic and yet not pedantic picture of child-life in bygone days. Here, however, instead of keeping to the strict path of history, the writer has indulged in imaginative reconstructions which are none the less vivid for being based on study and research. The children in whose company we spend fourteen widely separated days are real children, and in each chapter there is some incident or some adventure which gives it the character of a short story. The first day opens in a Swiss lake-village, the last in an English seaside town of Edward VII's time. In the interval we have made the acquaintance of little Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and Anglo-Saxons; we have gone on a picnic with two Plantagenet princesses and been to school with the son of an Elizabethan Londoner. It has been thought that a day in the life of a villein's child, or of an infant-operative during the Industrial Revolution, would make too painful reading, but attention is not devoted only to the children of the well-to-do, and the range of interest is wide.

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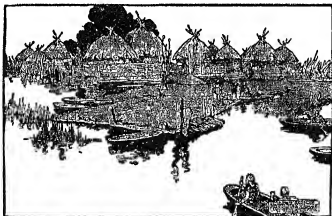
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I

THE BRONZE HARPOON

3500 B.C.

WHEN Ban opened his eyes, the first thing he saw was a patch of light quivering on a wall of pine planks. At the same time he could hear a soft, rippling sound, which came from beneath his deerskin pallet. His home was a thatched hut built on piles driven into the bed



LAKE-DWELLING

of the great lake which is now called the Lake of Geneva, and it was one of a group of such huts huddling together about fifty feet from the shore. The patch of light was the reflection of the rising sun on the water.

The boy looked lazily round him. By his side his younger brother was still asleep. Their father and mother lay farther off, the mother holding the baby of the family in the crook of her arm. Next to her the only daughter was curled up cosily. Right at the other end of the hut were three oxen, four sheep, a couple of goats, and a kid. In the centre, so that the smoke

could escape through an opening in the roof, was the clay hearth. Tables and chairs there were none, but a great many different objects were hung from wooden pegs or scattered about—stone-tipped spears and arrows, baskets woven from twigs and used for catching fish, bone harpoons for spearing them, flax-fibre nets for snaring birds, the lake-mother's distaff for spinning wool, her stone quern for grinding wheat, and a small jar with her bone needles and sheep-sinew threads. Along a rough shelf were ranged the bowls and platters, large and small, moulded out of reddish-brown clay, some of them quite plain, but others of the finer sort decorated with dents and scratches made by the potter's thumb-nail when the clay was still soft. With these were two lamps of the same pottery, each with its wick of moss floating in tallow.

"I am the only one awake," thought Ban. But almost at that moment the baby opened its eyes and began to coo. Then the lake-father heaved himself on to his elbow and opened his mouth in a mighty yawn.

He was a sturdy fellow, his skin tanned by the sun, his huge mop of light-coloured hair tumbling over his keen blue eyes. He had splendid teeth, white and strong, but they met edge to edge, as did the teeth of all the lake-dwellers, instead of overlapping as the teeth of most human beings do to-day. Though he was quite intelligent, he knew, and could say, very few words. Small children can now speak a great deal better than did the grown-up lake-dwellers of that far-off time.

"Wife," said the lake-father, "sun is above mountain-top! Children, fish for breakfast!"

The lake-mother now sat up, but more slowly because of the baby on her arm, and the three children scrambled to their feet. Ban, because he was the eldest, and also because he was a helpful boy, fetched one of the twig baskets and held it while his father pulled up one of the loose planks in the floor of the hut. Through the hole the basket was dropped into the water beneath, Ban proudly clutching the long flaxen cord tied to the handle.

From the farther end of the hut came a lowing of oxen and a bleating of goats and sheep. The beasts were impatient to get ashore to the rich grazing-grounds along the lakeside, but they knew that they would have to wait until the human creatures had eaten.

Now the lake-mother had fastened up her short, fluffy hair

with long pins of carved ox-bone, and had tethered her baby by its ankle to a peg driven for that purpose between two upright beams. Unless small children and active animals were tied up in that way, there was always the danger that they might crawl or walk out of the house and into the water. Meanwhile the lake-father was blowing upon the cinders which were kept constantly smouldering upon the clay hearth, and Dhu, the daughter of the family, was fetching the earthenware pots and the flint scrapers and knives which would be needed at breakfast. She was darker than the others—hence her name ‘Dhu,’ meaning ‘black’; Ban was the fairest, and his name meant ‘white’; the second boy was called ‘Aray’—‘smooth water’—because he had been born on a day when the lake became suddenly calm after a great storm; and the baby was still nicknamed ‘Begh,’ a good name for a small child, as it meant ‘small’.

“Hail!” shouted Ban, hastily hauling up the basket.

Inside a fish was leaping and floundering. The boy caught it deftly between his hands, and his father gaffed it with a stick.

“The ashes are red,” said the lake-mother, “give me the fish.”

Already there was a bowl of something that looked like porridge, but was really millet-seed, getting hot on the hearth, and the lake-mother grilled the fish where the ashes glowed brightest.

“You boys,” remarked the father, as they squatted round their meal, “you boys will take the beasts to graze this day. I go with my bow to seek the red deer.”

“And I with you, father?” asked Ban, eagerly.

His father hesitated, with a saucer-shaped dish of millet half-way to his wide mouth. Ban was only a year older than Aray, and both of them were still young to be taken out hunting; but he was bold and skilful, whereas his brother was rather timid and clumsy, and it was certainly well that the eldest boy of the family should learn all that his father could teach him. Then if any misfortune should befall, he could quickly take his father’s place and look after his mother and the younger children.

“And you with me,” said the lake-father, changing his mind.

“That is good,” said the lake-mother, who had a soft

corner in her heart for the more gentle Aray. "Begh will stay with me while I weave, and Dhu can help me to grind wheat in the quern. And our second son can take the beasts ashore to feed. He is a good herdsman, is our second son!"

Aray grinned happily at these words. He liked nothing better than to spend a long, quiet day in the meadows, where the blue-blossomed flax and the brightly tufted cornflowers grew, and where he was wise in finding patches of sweet, tall grass for the oxen to graze upon, or strips of coppice with green shrubs not yet so well grown that the goats could not, by standing on their hind legs, reach some of the lower shoots. There were games to play, too, with the other village boys, and tales to tell of men and beasts, and of the strange, unseen powers which lived in the sky and sent storm or calm, harvest or hard times, to the mortals below.

Breakfast was now finished, and Dhu carried the bowls and platters to the lakeside, where she washed them in the water and dried them with grass and leaves. She would have liked to stay there until Aray came ashore with the beasts, and then to go with him and them to the pastures on the edge of the woods where wild strawberries could sometimes be found, but she had many tasks to do, helping her mother in the hut. As the only girl of the family she was expected to be useful, and she often wished either that she were a boy, or that the baby were a girl, and would some day be able to give her an aiding hand. Quite tiny girls could wind flax, scrape goats' hide with a flint scraper, and pick out from a heap of stones those which would make the best arrow-tips and lance-heads and knives; but boys had more amusing tasks and much greater rewards. Dhu sighed as she pattered back across the wooden jetty with her slender arms full of clean crockery.

Meanwhile the lake-father, eagerly aided by his eldest son, was making ready for the chase. Moored to one of the piles on which the house rested, was a boat scooped out of a tree-trunk. The bark was still rough and mossy on the outer surface, and it gleamed like the scaly hide of a crocodile as the frail-looking craft dipped and rose. Such boats could be driven in two ways: either with a long pole at the stern, like a modern punt, or with a two-bladed paddle, like a Canadian canoe. To-day the lake-father decided to use the pole, so that there would be more room in the boat for the carcass of the red deer which he hoped to bring home.

THE BRONZE HARPOON

Ban helped to stow his father's bow, a sheaf of arrows, a short hunting-spear, and a coil of flaxen cord on board. His mother added a small basket of barley-cakes, in case, as she said with a smile, "the two men might be hungry." And then they were off, speeding along the lake, which broke into merry white streaks on either side of the prow.

There were one or two other boats out already, and the men in them shouted gruff greetings to one another.

"Do you go forth after the red deer?" called Ban's father to each canoe he came near.

The first two men shook their shaggy heads, but the third nodded, and Ban saw that he, too, had a spear, a bow, a coil of cord; and a bundle of arrows with him.



TREE-TRUNK CANOE

"Where do you seek the red deer?" asked Ban's father, sending his boat towards the other with a vigorous prod of the pole.

"At the end of the lake, by the tall trees, where the bear was slain in the time of sowing of barley," answered his neighbour.

"That is well. I will go to the other side of the water, where the forest comes down to the brink. Good hunting, friend!"

"And good hunting to you."

Ban's father swung the boat round and began to punt it towards the farther side of the beautiful sheet of water shimmering blue in the morning light. He was glad that the other hunter had chosen that particular place to begin his pursuit of the deer, for he himself thought the chances were better elsewhere.

"May Those-who-dwell-in-the-sky send me a seven-pointed stag," he said. "For my digging-tool grows blunt, and needs a new tip of strong horn."

"If you had such a tool as men say our neighbour Yar has got, you would never need new tips of horn," remarked Ban.

"Yar is a great man. He owns many goats and oxen. He has many things, goat-skins and ox-hides, clay beads and shell

beads, and pots painted with red stripes, to give in exchange for those marvels—which-the-dark-haired-men-bring-from-the-far-lands."

"What is that stuff which they bring, which is not like anything that we have?" asked the boy, curiously.

"They say that in certain places there are deep in the earth certain veins of hardness, some red and some grey. These being dug out, and melted by fire, and mixed together, and poured into a mould of a certain form, grow hard again, and can be made into spear-heads, and arrow-tips, and digging-tools—yes, and into fish-hooks, and harpoons, and pegs."



STAG'S HORN

In this fashion the lake-father tried to explain to his son the nature of the alloyed metal called bronze, a mixture of copper and tin, which had been discovered and was being used by more advanced races in other parts of the ancient world. Already travellers coming from Asia had begun to barter bronze for such things as the more backward people of the west had to offer, and in this way commerce had its beginnings long before history began. In this way, too, was spread the knowledge of this mixed metal which was to give its name one day to a whole age in the story of mankind—the Bronze Age. Ban and his fellow lake-dwellers lived just when the Later Stone Age was passing gradually into the Age of Bronze, and from time to time they saw bronze tools and weapons, though as yet these were very rare.

"Would Yar give us one of these marvels in exchange for this boat, and all your stone-tipped arrows, and our best ox?" asked Ban.

His father laughed.

"Yar has two boats of his own, each greater than this. And why should he need arrows with stone tips, when he has arrows tipped with this marvellous stuff? As for our best

ox, it is little better than his worst. No, we must be content with our old ways."

Presently the boat grounded on the shelving shore, and Ban and his father jumped numbly out. While the boy fetched the weapons from the hollow end by the prow, the man moored the vessel to a half-sunken tree-stump at the water's edge. Though there was another vessel, similar but rather larger, moored only a few hundred yards away, it was hidden from them by a jutting-out point of land thickly tufted with trees.

Ban knew that when once they were well into the wood he must tread very softly and not breathe a word, for the red deer were easily startled and fleet of foot. He knew, too, that it was important that the wind should be blowing towards the pursuing hunters—otherwise the beast would smell them and be off before an arrow could be fitted into its notch, or the string of the bow pulled to let it fly.

The wood was all uphill, and after the two hunters had been climbing slowly and carefully for some time they came to a little clearing, beyond which the ground dropped sharply away, forming a bare ridge of rock thinly clothed with moss and flowers. Ban's father made a quick, stealthy motion with his hand, and they both stood motionless, their knees a little bent, their eyes puckered up, and their mouths half open. A moment later the ruddy brown patch which the lake-father had seen moving among the trees came clearly into view, and proved to be, as he had guessed, the coat of a fine stag with seven-pointed antlers.

The stag was not aware that any human being was near. He stood on the top of the ridge with his handsome head erect and his nervous nostrils quivering, but he neither smelt nor saw his enemies, and his anxiously cocked ears did not catch any suspicious sound.

Swiftly and silently the lake-father fitted a flint-tipped arrow into its place on the supple bow, and stretched the bow-string the full length of his arm. Carefully he took aim, thinking at the same time of grilled venison for dinner and a new deerskin garment for his wife. There was not a sound but the faint stirring of the trees and the call of birds in the wood. Then suddenly the silence was shattered by a loud crash and a wild cry on the other side of the ridge. Like a flash the stag leaped away, its eyes full of terror, and vanished into the depths of the wood.

The lake-father hesitated for a moment. Should he follow the timid creature's example, or should he boldly go forward and see what was happening yonder? A second cry, fainter but more desperate than the first, made up his mind for him. "Stay here," he whispered to Ban. Then, with swift, light steps, he ran over the ridge-top and disappeared.

Ban was usually an obedient boy. He knew that if he disobeyed he would be punished with a firm and heavy hand. But this time he felt that it was too much to expect him to remain behind. So he followed his father at such speed that he was not too late to see what happened next.

Where the ground sloped downward the trees grew rather far apart, and the grass was strewn with rough stones of various shapes and sizes. Half-way down this slope a man lay on his back, one leg doubled up beneath him, and one arm shielding his face. And lowering its huge, angry head—ready to gore him to death—was the great wild ox which he had been about to spear through the heart when a stone had tripped him up, and he had fallen almost beneath its hoofs. In falling he had dropped his hunting-spear, and it lay between him and Ban's father.

All these things Ban saw at a glance. Then he saw his father leap forward, snatch up the spear, and, just as the ox prepared for the final thrust with its huge horns, drive the weapon into the creature's side with all his strength.

The boy did not hesitate. He dashed back, snatched up his father's spear, and ran like a deer to the place where the struggle was being waged. The ox was swaying to and fro, badly wounded but not hurt to death. Ban's father had seized it by the horns and was hanging on desperately when he heard a small voice behind him.

"Quick, father—here is your spear!"

The man let go his hold on the left horn, grabbed at the spear—and two minutes later the great wild ox lay dead.

Meanwhile the other man had crawled out of danger, and was lying, leaning on his arm and watching the fight with anxious eyes. When he saw that it was over he called out:

"Leave the spears in the carcase—my sons will fetch them."

Ban's father stopped trying to tug out his own spear and came up to the man.

"Yar!" he exclaimed.

The man nodded.

"Yar. And now your friend Yar. And always your friend Yar."

Ban's father bent down and slipped his arm beneath Yar's shoulders.

"Up!" said he, encouragingly.

The older man, leaning heavily upon him, managed to stand, but he could not walk. Ban's father hastily felt his leg bones—the lake-dwellers had some rough skill in surgery—and declared that nothing was broken.

"Here, Ban," he called to his son, "help me on the other side. Go gently. Beware of loose stones."

Yar grimaced with pain at every movement, but he uttered no moan, and very slowly he was half-hoisted, half-dragged, down to the edge of the lake, where his own boat was moored—a larger and finer boat than Ban's father had ever had, with a spare spear and sheaf of arrows by the prow.

"Lay me in my boat," said Yar. "Maybe I can paddle myself home."

Ban's father shook his shaggy head solemnly.

"No. With one hand? No. I will take the paddle."

"Have you no boat of your own here?"

Ban's father waved and pointed with his hand to show where his own boat was.

"Tie it to mine," said Yar. "It cannot be left here. Evil men might come down from the mountains Or evil spirits."

"We will put my son in my boat," declared the other, and Ban glowed with pride. It was the happiest moment of his life up to that day.

"Can he use a pole or an oar?" asked Yar. "He is small. My youngest son is of his size."

"Small but strong, O Yar," said the father, confidently. "He can steer the boat and help to drive it through the water, while I ply the paddle here."

"Good," grunted Yar, "that is good. Let us go."

Meanwhile Ban had been taking a close look for the first time at this rich and powerful neighbour, wielder of bronze-tipped spears, master of many cattle, whom till then he had beheld only in the distance, journeying up the lake with his two elder sons. The great Yar wore a necklace of painted clay beads, not unlike the one which Ban's father wore on feast-days and at sacrifices; but he had on his arms bracelets of burnished bronze, and his loin-cloth of flaxen fabric was

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of a finer weave and a fairer colour than any Ban had ever seen.

Soon they were moving smoothly over the water, the lake-father swinging the double-bladed paddle right and left with steady, even strokes, and Ban steering the smallest boat which had been lashed to the stern.

"You know where my house stands?" asked Yar.

The lake-father nodded.

"And where is yours?"

The lake-father lifted one hand from the paddle and held it forth with all the fingers stretched out.

"Near the shore, where the young birches grow, there are houses in our village—*so*. This"—he wagged his middle finger—"this is my house."

"You have sons?"

Three fingers showed how many.

"Daughters?"

One finger answered the question.

Yar nodded. He liked this man. He was brave, skilful with his spear and his oar, and quick at reckoning on his fingers—as the lake-folk understood such things.

"The headman of your village grows old," remarked Yar, suddenly.

The lake-father nodded.

"My wife's father's father," said he. "He has been a good headman. But he is very old. And soon he will pass to the land of the spirits, beyond the place where the sun goes to rest."

"He has no son to follow him?"

"No son. He had"—three fingers showed how many sons—"but a bear slew the first, and the second went forth hunting and never came back, and the third died when his house was devoured by the fire-spirit one night."

Yar looked grave. Fire was the greatest danger that the lake-folk had to fear; their flimsy wooden houses burned so fast, and the flames so often spread from one house to another. Sometimes whole villages were destroyed, and such of the villagers as escaped in their boats had to paddle away as fast as they could, leaving almost all their possessions behind them.

"Then who," asked Yar, "will follow the very old one, and be headman of the village when he goes to the realms of the sunset?"

THE BRONZE HARPOON

The lake-father shook his head doubtfully.

"We be all much alike in strength and in skill," said he. "And most of us have little gear. A man"—he glanced back over his shoulder at his new acquaintance—"a man who owned a spear or a sheaf of arrows tipped with marvellous-stuff-which-the-dark-men-bring-from-the-far-lands might rule over us all—if he had the mind."

"If he had the mind," repeated Yar, thoughtfully.

Ban now had an idea.

"My father," he called from his place in the smaller craft. "What of the food which my mother gave us?"

His father stopped paddling.

"Are you hungry, O Yar?" he asked politely. "Ban my son is not altogether foolish. It is true that my wife his mother put some barley-cakes in the boat."

"Barley-cakes are very good," returned the great man, with equal politeness.

"Throw two barley-cakes into the boat, my son," shouted the lake-father, signalling to his son with his hand, "and eat the other yourself."

Ban obeyed, and soon all three were munching noisily and—we might think—greedily, as the boats lay motionless on the quiet blue water.

Meanwhile Aray had taken the oxen and the goats out to graze, and had driven them over the wooden jetty to the lakeside where the grass was deep and full of sweet-smelling flowers. It was too early yet to gather crab-apples from the stunted but sturdy trees on the edge of the wood, but Aray noticed that already the green fruit was beginning to take on the faint brownish tint which meant that it would be ripe before long. Crab-apples roasted in the hot red ashes were a favourite treat with all the lake-people, particularly the youngest among them, and Aray was glad to see that there promised to be a good crop that year.

When the sun was high, the boy sat down under a birch tree and made a simple lunch off the barley-cake his mother had given him. None of the other village boys was in sight. Those who were herding cattle had driven them higher up the slope, but Aray kept near the lake because he wanted to see his father's canoe coming back with the red deer on board. He had no doubt that there would be a red deer on board. No hunter in all the village was more skilful with bow-and-

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arrow and spear than his father. And Aray had been promised a digging-tool of his very own the next time there was half a set of antlers to spare. He was a farmer by nature, not a fisher or a hunter, and he greatly desired to dig and sow and reap a small patch of land, without any help or counsel from anyone.

It was a beautiful day, and the boy was very well pleased to lie under the silver-birch, looking up at the quivering grey leaves against the bright blue sky, and dreaming of all the things he hoped to do some day. Presently he fell half-asleep, knowing that the beasts also were resting in the shade and would not wander away just yet. And from this drowsy mood he was roused by his sister's voice calling his name

"Wake, Aray—wake up—I have finished my task at home, and I have come to eat my dinner out-of-doors with you."

Aray opened his eyes and grinned in a friendly way at Dhu.

"Was it a hard task, sister?" he asked.

"Grinding wheat in the quern. Our mother says that when I have ground as much wheat as she has, my hands will not grow weary so soon. But I love better to help to weave the wool and the flax—and best of all to put spots and stripes of colour on beads, and platters, and bowls, before the clay is baked"

And Dhu sighed as she sat down on the grass beside her brother and laid between them a coarse-looking, shapeless loaf of what they called 'bread.'

"There is enough for you to have some also, if you are still hungry," said she.

"I have had enough already. But shall we give some to Snow Bud?"

"Where is she?"

"Snow Bud!" called Aray, sitting up and raising his voice.

"Come, Snow Bud, come!"

And Snow Bud came.

She was a charming little white kid, still playful and friendly and small, and all the children were very fond of her. Dhu fed her with crumbs, and she nibbled them daintily, and licked her white lips with her small pink tongue very politely when she had finished, after which she skipped away with a joyful bleat.

"It is time now to go down to the lakeside and watch for our father's return," said Aray, scrambling to his feet. "He

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is sure to bring home a red deer, and if it has good antlers, I am to have my digging-tool at last."

"And my mother will have a new deerskin coat, and some new bone needles," added Dhu, who was a practical-minded child.

She followed her brother to the water's edge, and they both stood shading their eyes with their hands and peering towards the distant point where they expected the boat to appear.

"They will soon come," she said. "See how high the sun is now—almost overhead. And look at the shadow of the birch tree."

All the lake-children were taught from an early age to notice such things as these. It was the only way they had of telling the time of day, but it answered very well. They also learned to mark when certain trees began to bud, when certain birds began to build, when the corn showed the first touch of yellow, when the swallows came and went, for that was their way of telling the seasons of the year. When they were older, they were taken out after dark and made to look up at the stars, and they had to remember the patterns which those shining specks made upon the deep purple of the sky. The moon, too, played an important part in their education, for by her changes they reckoned the months, though as yet these were neither numbered nor named.

"Look!" cried Aiy, pointing eagerly up the lake. "Here they come!"

"No," said Dhu, whose sight was keener than his. "That is not our boat. There are two boats, brother"—she held up two fingers—"two, not one." And she held up one finger, wagging it as the lake-folk did to show that they were counting, not merely pointing.

"The small boat is ours," cried Aiy, hopping with excitement. "I can see Ban. He is steering it with the pole."

"I can see him," shrilled Dhu, hopping even higher. "And I can see our father in the big boat. There is a man with him in the big boat. But no red deer. Brother, there is no red deer in the big boat—no red deer in the small boat. They are bringing home a man, not a deer."

Aiy shook his mop of sun-bleached hair in a puzzled manner. "No deer—no digging-tool for me," he murmured, sadly.

The two boats were now well in view, and Ban, catching

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sight of his brother and sister, waved his hand. They waved back, and thereby attracted the attention of Yar.

"Your children?" he asked, with a jerk of his braceleted arm towards the shore

Ban's father followed the direction of the arm

"My children—Dhu and Aray," he said, not without pride, for they were tall children for their age, and had straight legs, which was more than could be said for all the little lake-dwellers. Straight legs were admired because they were uncommon. By dint of much creeping and stooping these long-ago people were often rather stunted and bandy, though they had strong shoulders and powerful arms.

"Look, brother," cried Dhu, as, with a vigorous thrust of the paddle, their father changed the direction of Yar's canoe. "They are not coming home to the village. They are going farther up the lake."

"They are going to the dwelling of Yar," exclaimed Aray, "the great house on the shore."

"Then the man in the boat was Yar," cried Dhu.

Neither of the children had ever seen Yar face to face, though they had heard a great deal of talk about that remarkable man, who chose to live on land instead of on the lake, and whose house was half-hidden by a high wall of turf and a wooden stockade. The time was to come, though not till many years later, when all the lake-dwellers would follow this example, but to Dhu and Aray, as to their father and mother, it seemed a strange plan, fraught with much danger.

Ban's father was keenly interested in this mysterious house. To our eyes it would look like a small earthen hut, and a very rough one, but a palace could not have seemed more magnificent to the lake-people. It was shaped like a bee-hive, and its pointed roof was thatched with wickerwork. Inside the stockade were shelters for the beasts, which did not share Yar's home with him as the beasts of the lake-dwellers shared their masters' homes with them. Opposite a gap in the stockade a small jetty ran out into the lake, and at the end of this jetty Ban's father stopped paddling. Then Yar raised a mighty shout.

A woman and two boys promptly came running single-file along the jetty, the taller boy first. Like Yar they wore bracelets and necklaces of bronze, and scanty, simple garments of flaxen cloth. The woman had also a deerskin cloak across

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her shoulders, fastened with a pin of curiously carved horn. She babbled anxiously as she came, waving her arms above her head.

"Silence, wife," roared Yar. "No evil has befallen. A wild ox knocked me down, but it is dead, and I am safe. This man slew it and saved me."

"May his basket be full of fish for ever!" cried Yar's wife. It was one of the most polite things which a lake-dweller could say.

"Come, sons," Yar commanded, "come and help me to climb out of the boat."

Aided by Ban's father, the two stalwart youths hauled the bruised and shaken Yar on to the jetty, but he would not let them carry him to the house.

"Friend," said he, "move my boat to that pile where the mooring-ropes have made a scar. Return then to your village, where your wife and children wait for you. My sons will go and fetch the dead ox, and they will bring your spear to you before sunset. Now I will put healing herbs upon my leg. And then I will sleep. Come, wife—come, sons."

Ban's father watched them staggering slowly away, holding Yar up in their midst, and a scowl crept over his good-natured face. He had expected to be asked to enter the marvellous house which, like the rest of the villagers, he had seen only from afar, and he was almost childishly disappointed.

"Come, son," he grunted, "we must be getting home."

After mooring Yar's boat to the pile, he jumped numbly into his own, gripped the pole, and sent the little craft speeding swiftly across the water. Ban glanced back, and saw Yar and his family disappear beyond the turf wall and the high stockade.

Meanwhile Dhu had scampered back to tell her mother the amazing news. Two boats—one of them Yar's boat, with Yar himself and the lake-father in it—but no deer! And both boats had vanished up the lake in the direction of Yar's famous house! Aray dared not leave the beasts, and, now that he had no longer any reason to linger near the water's edge, he drove them up the hill. He could hear the cheerful voices of some of the other village boys yonder, and the bleating of the goats in their charge.

The lake-mother was much excited at the tale told by Dhu, and the baby, though he was still too young to understand

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what it was all about, saw that something wonderful was in the air, and clapped his small hands

Presently the splash of water, and the bumping of the boat against the house-piles, announced the return of Ban and his father. They were received by an eager family, longing to hear more, and impatient because everything could not be explained in a few words.

When the father had finished his story, the mother did not look very pleased.

"So," said she. "You have brought no meat home, no horn or hide. And your spear is sticking in the ribs of a wild ox at the other end of the lake. Yar is a great man. You saved his life. And yet he did not ask you to go into his house. He did not give you so much as a fish-hook of the marvellous-stuff-which-the-dark-men-bring-from-the-far-lands. If you had some of that stuff—even a little—the villagers would make you headman when the Very Old One goes beyond the sunset."

Her husband grunted. There was something in what she said, but he did not want to admit that he was disappointed.

"Yar must please himself," said he. "And if I have none of the marvellous-stuff-which-the-dark-men-bring-from-the-far-lands, who among the villagers is any better off? Let us eat."

The lake-mother hastened to put some food before the hungry man and the even hungrier boy—very plain fare, coarse bread, fresh berries, watercress, and millet porridge, but they seemed to enjoy it, and their powerful teeth made short work of even the husks of the grain which were left mixed with the meal after the grinding in the quern. This quern was a stone trough in which the grain was ground by means of a stone pestle—a slow process, though not a sure one.

After their supper the lake-family set about various tasks, the mother spinning wool, the daughter trying to sew two rather shabby skins together with a bone needle and a sinew thread, Ban and his father sharpening flint arrow-tips. There was always much to do while daylight lasted, but after dusk the faint, unsteady flame from the clay lamp made work difficult.

Towards sunset Aray returned, driving the beasts along the jetty with a hollow, clattering noise. He was eager to hear the tale which Dhu and his mother had heard already, and Ban

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whispered it in his ear as they tethered Snow Bud to her own special peg

"Hark, wife," cried the lake-father, suddenly. "There is a boat knocking against the piles, and someone is calling!"

He heaved back the oblong of wicker and wood which did



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duty for a door, and saw Yai's boat, with Yar's two elder sons in it, rocking on the water just below.

The taller youth rose to his feet, and stretched up his right hand, in which were two spears. One was the lake-father's own spear, and the other a fine new one with a tip of shimmering bronze.

"For you," said the youth, "from Yai, my father."

Speechless with delight, the man grabbed at the marvellous weapon. Ban, peering under his father's elbow, saw that Yar's son, after fumbling in the boat, was holding out something towards him—a beautiful little bronze harpoon.

"For you, boy," said Yar's son, "from my father."

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Not waiting to be thanked, he made a sign to his companion, who dug the paddle into the water and sent the boat swiftly on its homeward way.

That night, after the lake-children were lying on their deerskin pallets, their father and mother sat up cross-legged, wakeful and excited. In one hand the father clutched his new spear, from which he could not bear to be parted; with the other he held to his lips a bone whistle on which he played over and over again a funny little tune of three notes. This meant that he was feeling particularly happy.

Ban, too, was happy. He would have liked to sleep with his beautiful bronze harpoon in his hand, but this his mother would not allow, for fear that he might hurt himself or his brother while they were asleep. She put it on the shelf, propped up against a clay jar, so that he could see it from where he lay; and he knew that it would be the first thing on which his eyes would rest when he opened them the next morning.

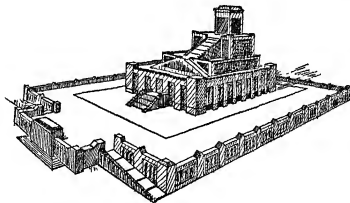
II

THE LITTLE PRIESTESS OF THE MOON

2745 B.C.

IT is time for the lady En-khedu-Anna to open her royal eyes."

The lady En-khedu-Anna shut her royal eyes firmly. She did not wish to wake up. She did not wish to go to morning prayers in the temple of Nin-gal the moon-goddess,



SUMERIAN TEMPLE

whose chief priestess she was—a chief priestess of eleven years old. And after morning prayers there would be lessons. And after lessons—En-khedu-Anna knew that after lessons she would be allowed to play in the temple garden with the little girls who were being educated in the temple school, but that happy hour seemed very far away.

"It is time," said the grey-haired royal governess once more, "it is time for the lady En-khedu-Anna to open her eyes."

There was a note in her voice which told the youthful

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princess that now it was in truth time. Slowly her thick, black eyelashes fluttered apart and her big, dark eyes blinked at the bright sun shining upon the city of Ur, in the flat, sandy land of Sumer—that country which we now call Irak.

The rooms set apart for the little girl were on the upper floor of a two-storeyed building within the high and massy walls of the ancient sanctuary. The bricks were covered both outside and inside with white-washed plaster, and the roof, of which the centre was open to the sky, was thatched with dried reeds. En-khedu-Anna had her own bathroom, kitchen, and private chapel. The dark, red-brick floor of her bedroom was covered with rush-mats woven in complicated patterns, and her wooden bedstead, with its hammock-like mattress of knotted string, had a tall head-board inlaid with copper and white shells, in a design of birds and flowers. Near the door was a small clay image of the moon-goddess, the divine Nin-gal, represented as a dignified lady with a crown on her head and wearing a sort of petticoat of fringed cloth.

En-khedu-Anna smiled in a friendly way at the goddess, whom she had been taught to think of as her special friend and guardian among the numerous gods of Sumer. No doubt she was a kindly goddess, though she did expect rather a lot of attention from her faithful servants.

"It is time for the royal lady En-khedu-Anna to go to the bath," said the governess.

The royal lady allowed herself to be led to the bathroom, where there was a brick-lined bath sunk into the floor, with two tall stone jars full of water standing beside it. En-khedu-Anna stood in the bath while two women-slaves poured the water over her. It fell with a cool splash on to her feet and then ran away along a brick drain which carried it out into the garden. After this her slender, tawny-brown limbs were rubbed with sweet oils, and her thick black hair was combed with a silver comb. Her only garment, a skirt of fringed woollen stuff falling from knee to ankle, was fastened about her waist, a necklace of cornelian and lapis lazuli beads was clasped round her small throat, bracelets of the same were slipped upon her arms, golden half-moons were hung in her ears, and a garland of leaves, made of gold hardly thicker than a real leaf, was bound round her head.

En-khedu-Anna had nothing to eat before she went to the

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temple; the goddess must be greeted before her priestess broke her fast. But she was allowed a draught of fresh water out of her own little drinking-cup of fluted gold. As a King's daughter and the chief priestess of the great Nin-gal, everything she touched or used had to be as beautiful as the clever Sumerian craftsmen could make it.

From the temple came the soft, shuffling sound of many bare feet moving slowly upon the brick pavement. The other priestesses, of various ages and degrees, were making their way thither, and after each had taken up her appointed place, En-khedu-Anna entered alone, walking stiffly and self-consciously, her chin up, and her eyes fixed upon the great image of the goddess which stood on a stone altar at the farther end of the building. Through high wooden doors sheathed in copper, silver, and gold, the small, solemn figure came, and at the same



STATUE OF SUMERIAN GODDESS



GOLD VASE FROM UR

moment two priestesses stepped forward, carrying between them a vase in which were some ears of corn and a cluster of ripe dates. A third priestess brought a graceful silver cup full of water, which En-khedu-Anna took from her and emptied into the vase, saying at the same time, in her clear, childish voice:

"O great Nin-gal, O divine wife of the great god Nannar, look with favour upon thy servants in the lands of Akkad and Sumer, the land of the

north and the south, lying between the great rivers "

She bowed her head three times. Then two other priestesses

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stepped forward, carrying a sort of tray between them, on which were a loaf of barley-bread, a pat of rather queer-looking butter, a jar of thick, pale honey, and a glittering white cube of salt. This tray they set carefully on the ledge at the feet of the statue, and En-khedu-Anna, who knew every word and gesture of her part by heart, lifted up her voice again:



ASSYRIAN KING AND GRAND VIZIR

“O great Nin-gal, O divine wife of the great god Nannar, accept with favour these things which thy servants offer thee.”

“Great is Nin-gal,” chanted all the priestesses together. “Great is Nannar, faithful are their servants in the lands of Akkad and Sumer, the land of the north and the land of the south, lying between the great rivers.”

Morning prayers were almost ended now. It remained only for the little priestess to pray for her father, who had placed her there for that purpose.

“O great Nin-gal, O divine wife of the great

Nannar,” she said. “Look with favour upon Sargon of Agade, King of Akkad and Sumer, conqueror of many lands, mighty lord of valour.”

The priestesses dutifully echoed the words, though some of them may not have felt in their inmost hearts any particular devotion to Sargon of Agade, their own land of Sumer having been among the many which he had conquered.

The goddess having had her ‘breakfast,’ her worshippers were permitted to have theirs. The priestesses of lower rank ate all together in a long hall, but En-khedu-Anna and the lady who bore the title of the Mistress of the Maidens withdrew to the little priestess’s own house.

Meanwhile the temple cooks had been busy in their own quarters. They worked in a large courtyard, with a well in

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the centre and open fireplaces at each side. Near the well was a brick slab on which joints of meat were cut up, and farther away stood several stone querns not much unlike those which the lake-dwellers had used to grind their grain five thousand years before. Opening from this courtyard were two roofed chambers, one with a beehive-shaped oven for making bread, the other with a sort of kitchen stove of fire-proof clay. Beyond were storehouses for grain, oil, wine, wool, and all the various kinds of merchandise which the temple needed. The wool, brought on camel-back or donkey-back from the country around Ur, was woven and spun by women who spent their whole lives within those high brick walls. En-khedu-Anna loved to go and watch the weavers and spinners at work, but she often wished that she could have gone wearing the simple necklace and the plain woollen skirt of the little girls of the temple-school, for as soon as she appeared, tinkling with golden trinkets and draped with fringes of platted wool, the women would all pause in their tasks and rise and bow their heads before her, nor were they willing to return to the distaff or the loom till she had passed by.

On this particular morning the Mistress of the Maidens had something interesting to tell En-khedu-Anna. A new pupil had arrived at the temple-school, an eight-year-old girl, the only child of a merchant of Lagash, who was to be taught reading and writing so that when she grew up she could manage her own affairs, look after her property, and help to carry on her father's business.

En-khedu-Anna remembered how shy and homesick she herself had been when, only two years before, she had come to Ur from her old home in the north. Her father, after conquering Ur and Lagash and other cities of the south, had decided to seek the favour of the local gods by rebuilding and beautifying their temples, and by making his daughter the priestess of their great goddess Nin-gal. So she had been sent, with an escort of spearmen, to this strange city, where only the warlike fame of her father prevented people from giving her a cold welcome. Fortunately she was a friendly, attractive child, quick to learn the speech of the southern folk, not slow at her lessons, and very serious about her duties as a priestess, even after the first novelty and excitement had worn off. Now, after two years, she felt quite at home in the temple, and had ceased to miss her mother and her two brothers

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and all the sights and sounds of the palace at Agade. Her father she had never missed much, for that warlike and vigorous monarch was frequently absent on long campaigns, and his children saw little of him.

"O Mistress of the Maidens," said En-khedu-Anna, as she finished her breakfast of dates, cheese, and milk, "when lessons are over to-day, I should like to speak with this little one from Lagash."



CLAY CYLINDER OF SARGON

The "little one" was only three years younger than herself, but those three years seemed an immense time to the elder child.

"It shall be as you will," answered the Mistress of the Maidens. "That is a good thought. You will bring joy to this little one from Lagash."

Lessons in the temple-school consisted of reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic, legends of the gods, and hymns in their

honour. The children had no books, no paper, pens, or ink, indeed, none of the things which a modern child would expect to find in a schoolroom. They wrote upon moist clay, making wedge-shaped marks upon it with a sharp instrument. When such clay hardened, it became a letter, a legal document, a royal proclamation, a religious text, or an exercise in spelling, according to the characters traced upon it. A Sumerian library consisted of shelves stacked with slabs and cylinders of baked clay.

The forty little girls in the temple-school bowed their heads three times in greeting as En-khedu-Anna entered with the Mistress of the Maidens. One of the priestesses then gave them a short lesson in what then passed for 'history,' but what we should call 'myth' or 'fable,' so mixed was it with

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quaint and magical stories. On this particular morning the children were learning about the Sumerian Noah, a good man called Uta-Napishtim, who was saved when the gods, angry at the wickedness of men, decided to drown the whole world in a mighty flood. When the priestess had recited the story, she questioned the little girls one by one as they sat cross-legged on the brick floor, gazing earnestly up at her. To the youngest, who were only six or seven years old, she put the easiest questions.

"What was the name of the god who warned Uta-Napishtim, so that he might build a great boat before the Flood came?"

"The god Enki," said a chorus of fresh little voices.

"What was the name of the village where the good man dwelt?"

This was not quite so simple, but several of the children were able to answer, "The village of Shurruk." "

Presently the priestess turned to the little girls from ten to fourteen years old, beginning with En-khedu-Anna.

"O Princess, Priestess of Nin-gal, tell us what the good man Uta-Napishtim did, after he had built a great boat, as commanded by the god Enki."

"He loaded it with grain," said En-khedu-Anna, promptly, "and he took all his relations with him, and craftsmen who could carve and build all manner of things, and many beasts as well."

"How long did the rain fall and the winds blow?"

"Till the seventh day."

The priestess turned to some of the other girls and continued her questions.

"What did Uta-Napishtim do on the seventh day?"

"He sent forth a dove. But it came back, because the waters were everywhere."

"And what after that?"

"He sent forth a swallow," answered another pupil. "And the swallow came back, because the waters were everywhere."

"And what after that?"

"He sent forth a crow, and the crow saw that the waters were ebbing, and the crow cawed for joy, and did not come back."

The next lesson was writing, but here again the thoughts of the children were turned towards the story of the Flood, for they were made to trace the names of Enki, Uta-Napishtim,

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and Shurrupak on their clay tablets. Then the smaller children had to write such words as 'boat,' 'waters,' 'swallow,' and 'dove,' while the older ones wrote whole sentences describing the Flood.

En-khedu-Anna, from where she sat, could see the little newcomer from Lagash, a timid-looking child who seemed bewildered by her surroundings. Lagash also had been conquered by King Saigon, and En-khedu-Anna wondered if the people there were still angry with her father. After all, he had dealt mercifully with them, even as he had dealt with the people of Ur, and had rebuilt all the temples and palaces which had been destroyed during the war. And what could he have done more, to show his good will to the southern folk, than to send his own daughter to serve as priestess in the temple of their goddess?

When lessons were over, the children returned to their own quarters, to spend the hottest hours of the day quietly; some spinning wool, some stringing beads or making garlands, some playing draughts upon beautiful draught-boards inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The sun beat fiercely upon the temple-buildings and upon the great terraced tower, the Ziggurt, which rose above them on the south-west side. At a later date an even loftier tower was built there by another warlike king, but already this was high enough to throw a pleasant shadow across the temple-courts after the hour of noon.

As soon as that hour was past, En-khedu-Anna sent one of her attendants to fetch the newcomer from Lagash, who entered her presence shyly, with downcast eyes and hands raised in salutation.

"Come and sit near me," said the princess, encouragingly, "and tell me your name."

"My name is Lidda, O royal one," answered the child, still without looking up.

"You must not be afraid, Lidda," said En-khedu-Anna. "Everyone will be kind to you in the house of Nin-gal. When I came here first I was afraid. But there was no cause for fear."

"I will try not to be afraid, O royal one."

"It will be easier for you than it was for me," En-khedu-Anna went on, "because in Lagash they speak the same tongue as they do here in Ur. But in my old home at Agade they speak after another fashion, and I had much to learn.

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Also I had two brothers from whom I had parted with many tears. The Mistress of the Maidens says that you had no brothers."

"No, royal one; I am the only child of my father."

And En-khedu-Anna could see the little girl's mouth quivering and the tears gathering under her eyelids.

"It is good to have brothers," said the princess, "and I often wished for a sister. But it is also good to be the only child. Think how glad your father will be when you return to Lagash, having learned how to read and write and keep accounts."

"Yes, that is what my father said," cried Lidda eagerly, forgetting her shyness and looking up into the face of her new friend. "He said that I should be as if I were his son, and help him to make lists of merchandise, and of the coming and going of his caravans, and the number of his camels and his asses."

At the word 'asses' the rather prim smile of En-khedu-Anna changed to a joyful grin.

"I have two asses of my very own," she said. "Very beautiful and strong they are. Would you like to see them?" Lidda nodded.

"Come with me, then."

But before she spoke, En-khedu-Anna glanced at the Mistress of the Maidens, a person so important and so powerful that even the daughter of King Sargon could not defy her. All being well, and no stern look having answered the glance, the two little girls went out into the courtyard, En-khedu-Anna leading the way. After crossing the broad, paved road connecting the temple of the moon-goddess with the larger temple of the moon-god, they entered a grove of date-palms, at the end of which were the stables.

An old man who had come with En-khedu-Anna from Agade trotted out to meet them. He was clean-shaven in the Sumerian fashion, and wore the woollen skirt in which both men and women usually appeared. His grey hair was gathered into a sort of bun on his neck, and ear-rings of silver and lapis lazuli swung from his rather large ears. This was the Master of the Princess's Asses, an official whose duty it was to see that the beasts were well fed and regularly groomed, and that the chariot which they drew was kept in good condition, its wheels oiled, and its silver fittings burnished.

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"Lupad," said the princess. "I have brought this little girl to see my asses. Have they had their afternoon feed of barley?"

"Even at this hour those noble beasts are eating," answered Lupad, bowing low.

He held open the wooden gate of the shed where the asses were kept, and the children passed through, greeted by a steady, tranquil, crunching sound. The two asses were enjoying their barley, which they ate out of mangers of pale pink brick.

They were indeed fine creatures, as large as small horses, their coats clipped and brushed till they looked like grey velvet, their unshod hoofs glossy with oil, their manes and forelocks braided with coloured fringe, green and purple and blue. When they heard the voice of the little priestess they stopped eating and turned their heads eagerly towards her.

"Some sweetmeats, Lupad," she commanded.

Shaking his head doubtfully, the old man went to a shelf at the end of the shed and from a deep jar took a handful of tit-bits, made of stoned dates and thick honey.

"Do not give them too much of this sweet stuff," he pleaded. "Remember, O daughter of King Sargon, that if their coats are to be smooth, and their teeth strong, and their tempers gentle, these beasts must not have honey-discs too often."

"I know, I know," said En-khedu-Anna. "But they have not had any for twice two days. Come, you pretty things."

Lidda looked with wonder at the princess, who seemed so small beside the two handsome creatures, and yet who stroked their noses so fearlessly with one hand, while with the other she fed them.

"Would you like to feed them now?" asked En-khedu-Anna.

But Lidda shook her head. She was not exactly afraid, but she thought perhaps the asses would like better to be fed by their own mistress, whom they knew well. Did not En-khedu-Anna think so too?

When the asses had been patted and praised and called by various pretty names, the little girls took leave of Lupad and returned to the princess's own house. There the Mistress of the Maidens was waiting for them, together with the same

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grey-haired governess who had aroused En-khedu-Anna that morning. The air was cooler now, for the shadow of the temple-tower was creeping over the temple-courts, and a soft breeze was blowing from the river, making the palm-trees flutter their green plumes.

"There will be time for you to disport your royal self in the garden before the evening meal," remarked the Mistress of the Maidens, and En-khedu-Anna, if she had not remembered that she was both a princess and a priestess, would have run off as joyfully as any of the others to play with balls of coloured leather stuffed with straw.

In the garden of the moon-goddess there were no green lawns, no flower-beds, no climbing roses or blossoming trees. On either side of straight-paved paths date-palms raised their tufted heads, and round a square, brick-lined pond, pink-flowered tamarisks made a sort of hedge. In that dry, sandy soil it was not easy to grow many kinds of flowers, though along the river-bank there were blue-blossomed reeds and feathery rushes. The cedars which King Sargon had brought from Lebanon were still young trees, slender and thirsty-looking.

Some of the little girls, instead of playing ball-games or dancing in circles, preferred to sit in the shadow of the tamarisks and nurse their rather stiff, wooden dolls. Others clustered round any good-natured priestess who was willing to tell them a fairy-tale, or even a true story, if it were an exciting one.

"What shall we do?" asked En-khedu-Anna. It is a question which children have asked one another ever since there were children in the world, and which they will go on asking as long as there is a world for children to live in.

Lidda had no suggestions to make.

"Have you brought a ball with you, or a doll?"

"No, royal one. I left my dolls at home. My father thought I should not be allowed to play with dolls here."

"Most of the little girls play with dolls," said En-khedu-Anna. "I played with them myself when I first came here. Indeed, I have several still, in my own house."

And she beckoned to one of the young priestesses.

"What is the will of the lady En-khedu-Anna?" asked the priestess, coming forward with long, stately steps.

"My will is that you should go to my house, and look upon

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

the shelf in my bedroom near the head of my bed, and bring hither the three dolls which you will find sitting there."

The priestess bowed and departed.

"I am too old for dolls now," explained the princess, gravely, "and I have a great deal to do, being the chief priestess of the goddess Nin-gal. But if you would like to play with my dolls, you shall."

Lidda was delighted, and looked it.

"Are they boys or girls, royal one?" she asked.

"Two are girls, and one is a boy. I call him Akki, and his arms move."

"Akki—I have never heard that name before. And I have never had a doll with arms that moved."

"What, you have never heard of Akki? Then I know what we will do until it is time for evening prayers. The priestess Kamma shall tell you the story of Akki. I have heard it very often, but I do not mind hearing it again."

The girl who had been sent to fetch the dolls now returned, and Lidda gathered them happily into her arms. All three were of wood, and two had wigs made of strings of small black beads. The doll Akki had no wig, his head being roughly carved to resemble short-cropped hair, and, sure enough, his dumpy little arms could be moved up and down.

"Come and let us seek the priestess Kamma," commanded En-khedu-Anna

Lidda followed her, still clutching the three dolls, from which she did not wish to be parted, and before long they found Kamma sitting under a palm-tree, with a hair on the brick pavement beside her.

"O Kamma," said the princess, coming straight to the point. "This little one from Lagash has never heard the story of Akki. Will you tell it to us? And tell it so that she may understand."

The priestess smiled. She had a kind, thoughtful face, and her voice, when she began to speak, was very pleasant.

"Once upon a time," she began, "there lived a poor man called Akki. His home was on the bank of the mighty river Euphrates, and he made his daily bread by taking care of a little garden, where he grew pumpkins and cucumbers and onions and peas."

"He was a very poor man," En-khedu-Anna explained to Lidda. "It was not his own garden, and when the pumpkins

THE LITTLE PRIESTESS OF THE MOON

and the peas were sold for pieces of silver, the master of the garden took most of the silver and gave Akki only a little."

"My father has such a garden at Lagash," said Lidda, eager to show that she understood, "only I do not think that he sells pumpkins or peas. We eat them—we and our scribes and our slaves and our camel-drivers."

Kamma took up the story again

"Akki and his wife had no children, and though they were poor, they wished very much that they might have a son. And one day, when Akki was working in the garden on the bank of the river, he saw something floating past which looked like a basket made of plaited reeds. And from the basket came a faint cry."

"Oh," cried Lidda, "was it a nest with a baby bird in it?"

"It was not a nest, and the baby in it was not a bird but a little boy only a few days old. Akki did not know this till he had waded out into the river and pulled the basket ashore and lifted up the cover."

"And he was very much surprised," prompted En-khedu-Anna.

"Truly, for baskets with babies in them do not float down rivers every day. Akki took this basket home to his wife, and they decided to bring the child up as if he were their own. Nobody ever knew who he was, and what manner of people his parents were, or why he had been set adrift on the Euphrates."

"I think he must have been the son of some great prince," interposed En-khedu-Anna. "And perhaps a cruel uncle or an evil spirit stole him out of his cradle. That is what I think."

"It may have been so, royal one," said Kamma, cautiously, "and some day the truth may be known. At all events, the gardener's wife cared for the child while it was yet young, and when it was old enough the gardener taught it all he knew, and it grew up strong and bold and wise."

"And they gave him a name," added the princess. "They called him Sargon."

The "little one from Lagash" looked up with a rather anxious face. 'Saigon' she knew was the name of En-khedu-Anna's royal father, the terrible king who had conquered her native city and subdued the whole land of Sumer. Could it be that he was the hero of this delightful tale?

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

It was soon made clear that he was.

"Many years ago," said Kamma, "there was a warlike king called Lugal-zaggisi, who ruled over all Mesopotamia. He took many cities and burned many temples and palaces and carried away great spoils of silver and gold. Perhaps this child may have heard of him, for one of the cities he plundered was the city of Lagash."

Lidda wrinkled her brows.

"Yes, I think I have heard his name. My father said that Sargon was a more merciful king than Lugal-zag-zag-is-i."

She stumbled over the difficult word, and En-khedu-Anna pronounced it for her.

"Lugal-zaggisi. The king my father became a cup-bearer in his palace."

"After a time," said the priestess, continuing her story, "the cup-bearer became so powerful that he overthrew his master. There was war between them, and the king was defeated. And the cup-bearer was king in his place."

"Tell her about the travels of King Sargon my father," prompted the chief priestess, who was very proud of the alarming parent whom she so seldom saw.

"This king," said the priestess, "went far and wide, to many distant and wonderful countries, far from the land of the northern folk and far from the land of the southern folk, beyond the river Tigris on one side, and beyond the river Euphrates on the other. He went to the Taurus Mountains, in whose rocky heart are veins of silver, and to Mount Lebanon, where grow beautiful and mighty trees, with dark red, sweet-smelling trunks and very small green leaves, like rough, close-cropped green hair."

"He gave us certain cuttings for our garden here," added En-khedu-Anna. "Look, yonder"—the bracelets of lapis lazuli and cornelian jangled as she thrust out her arm—"you can see them, but they are still quite small. Some day they will be as tall as the tallest pillars in our temple."

Lidda looked politely in the direction where her royal friend was pointing, but she could only see some rather languid-looking saplings, and it was difficult to imagine that they might one day be as tall as the chief priestess said. She held up the doll Akki and pretended to show him the little cedars, and made him move his arms as if he were pointing at them too.

THE LITTLE PRIESTESS OF THE MOON

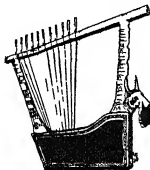
"To-night," said the chief priestess to Kamma, "it is my will that you should bring your harp to my own house and play upon it beside me till I fall asleep."

Kamma bowed her head.

"And you, 'little one from Lagash,'" whispered En-khedu-Anna, "you shall take Akki with you to-night. You are not afraid any more, are you?"

"No, royal one," answered Lidda, hugging Akki. "I am not afraid—now."

It was by this time the hour when the priestesses of Nin-gal



HARP

and their pupils ate their evening meal. With an encouraging smile to the newcomer, the chief priestess rose and then walked gravely along the broad, brick path to her own house. There she supped with her governess and the Mistress of the Maidens. Supper was much the same as breakfast, except that instead of milk they drank wine made of a sort of grain called sesame.

When the sun set over the desert, the moon began to shimmer out from the sky. It was the first full moon of the month of May, and all the people of Ur looked up reverently and anxiously at the glorious globe of burnished silver high above their city. Would Nannar, the moon-god, and Nin-gal, the moon-goddess, be merciful to their faithful worshippers and grant them good crops and peaceful days and freedom from cruelty and conquest?

Evening prayers in the temple were said at the hour when the sunset had faded and the moon was not yet at her highest.

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

Sometimes the chief priestess was very sleepy before the ceremony ended, and sometimes she fell fast asleep.

On this particular evening she kept awake pretty well until the prayers for the people of Akkad and Sumer had been chanted, but during the prayer for her father, King Sargon, she began to nod, and at the close of the solemn hymn to the moon-goddess she was so weary that she could hardly stand upright.

Then her governess gathered her up in her arms, no longer a royal lady or a chief priestess, but only a tired little girl, and carried her back to her own house on the farther side of the temple-courtyard.

Half an hour later the priestess Kamma went to that house, with her harp in her hand—a beautiful harp cased in silver and inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Remembering the words of En-khedu-Anna, she had come to play to her until she slept.

The governess met her at the door of the chief priestess's own room, smiling, with her finger on her lips.

"No need for any music to make the royal one sleep to-night," she whispered. "Already she is far away in the land of dreams."

III

THE CHILDREN OF THE QUEEN'S SCRIBE

1550 B.C.

IN a pleasant room, with gaily painted plaster walls, two small boys lay sleeping on narrow beds of yellow sycamore wood. These beds had mattresses filled with ducks' feathers and covered with blue-and-purple linen, but they had no pillows. Each boy's head was propped up on a curved neck-rest of polished acacia, and though to modern eyes nothing could look more uncomfortable, the plan seemed to work very well in ancient Egypt.

The place in which the two beds stood was a large house in the royal city of Thebes, on the east bank of the river Nile. Built round a paved courtyard, it had no windows in the outer walls, which were quite blank except for the great door of cedar, with bronze bolts and hinges. On either side was a limestone pillar, and on each of these an oval tablet, carved with the name of the owner of the house.

On these particular tablets the name was that of Ka-Tep, scribe to the mighty Queen Hatshepsut, Lady of the Upper and Lower Kingdoms of the land of Egypt. He was the father of the two boys who were just beginning to rub their eyes and look about them as the brilliant morning sunlight crept into their sleeping-room. Already slaves were busy in the courtyard, sprinkling water from a leather skin to lay the dust, and from the kitchen came a cheerful sound of bronze pots and pans being moved about. There was also a cheerful smell of freshly baked wheaten bread.

"Rise up, my brother," said the elder boy, who liked ordering the younger one about. "The great god Amen-Ra has risen already, and it is high time we said our morning hymn."

Rather unwillingly, his brother kicked off the light coverlet of embroidered linen and swung his slender brown legs over the side of the bed. Then they both stood up, stiff and solemn, raised their arms above their heads, and chanted a brief hymn

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to the Sun God, Amen-Ra, who was the greatest of all the many gods whom they were taught to worship.

These two were just like hundreds of other small Thebans, though their father and mother probably thought that they were rather more handsome and intelligent than the rest. They were slightly but strongly built, with vigorous, supple limbs and skins of a dusky-brown colour. Except for a braid of black hair dangling over one ear, each boy's head was closely shaven, and neither wore any clothes—unless you count a leather girdle, a linen loin-cloth, and a necklace. From such a necklace there always hung a talisman of gold or turquoise or bright blue pottery, or maybe a tiny, tight roll of papyrus inscribed with a luck-bringing charm and held in a pendant of gold or some other metal.

Like all young Egyptians, the two sons of the Queen's scribe were merry and contented. They had everything to make them so. Harsh parents were unknown—or almost unknown—in that kindly, laughter-loving land, although schoolmasters were occasionally more severe than their lazier pupils might have wished. But home was a pleasant place, where the children had toys and pet animals and plenty of good things to eat. Even among the poor, whose lives were hard and dull compared with those of the rich, boys and girls might—and often did—have happy homes sometimes. Only for the slaves and the captives was there little joy.

When Nekht, whose name meant 'Strength,' and Ra-Hetep, whose name meant 'the God Ra is well pleased,' had finished saying their prayers, they ran off gaily to that part of the courtyard where stood four or five large earthenware pitchers full of water, with smaller pitchers beside them. With shrieks of laughter the boys filled two of these smaller ones and flung the water over each other. It was an excellent morning bath, and the warm, sunlit air dried their limbs as well as any bath-towel could have done.

"We shall have to oil our side-locks to-day, brother," said the younger boy, ruefully. "Old nurse will make us do it."

"Not till the afternoon," his brother reminded him. "If we oil them now, they will get dusty before the banquet, and we shall be told to oil them again. You know our father does not like us to appear among his guests with our side-locks not shining and smooth."

"Those are true words, my son," said a deep voice behind

THE CHILDREN OF THE QUEEN'S SCRIBE

them, and the two swung round and bowed their heads before their father.

The scribe was an impressive figure, naked to the girdle but draped from waist to ankle in stiffly pleated and finely woven linen. On his head was a large wig of curly black hair, gleaming with the scented ointment with which Egyptians of the upper classes loved to anoint themselves. He was a tall man, broad-shouldered and long-limbed. Round his neck was a collar of gold wrought in the form of a garland of lotus-lilies; there were bracelets of gold on his muscular brown arms, and on his feet were sandals of closely plaited gazelle-skin. His elder son thought him the greatest man in the world, and looked forward to the day when he, too, would be a scribe, and stand upon the quayside counting and checking the bales of merchandise as they were unloaded from the ships at anchor there. The younger boy had a less serious and practical mind. He would have preferred to be a captain of the Queen's chariots, like his mother's brother—a much more exciting and adventurous career. But in Egypt all sons had to follow the calling of the father.

"Come, my sons," said Ka-Tep, "you must not be late at the House of Books to-day, or perchance your master will not let you depart with the rest of his scholars. I hope you both know your lessons well?"

"I know mine, O my father," declared Nekht stoutly.

"I know *some* of mine," murmured his brother, with less confidence.

"I hope 'some' will be enough to satisfy your master," said Ka-Tep, with a smile. "That would not have been enough for mine, in my schooldays. He always swore that a boy's ears were in his back, and that the way to make him listen was to beat him well."

"That is just what our master says," lamented Ra-Hetep. "And if you forget what he has taught you, he will never believe that it is not because you did not listen at the time. And he expects you to smile after he has beaten you."

"What said the great and wise Im-Hotep, my son? 'With a smiling face let thy days be happy, and rest not therein.' Now, eat and drink, for the hour draws near when the House of Books will open its portals."

"May we not first greet our mother?" pleaded the younger boy.

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

"Not to-day, my son. Your mother is busy with many things. There is much to do on the day of a banquet. She and your sister are weaving garlands. But she will come to the House of Books at noon, as is her wont."

These words cheered both boys, for at noon all the scholars had a brief rest from the lessons that seemed to them so difficult, and kind mothers and sisters came then with good things to eat and drink.

Refreshed by a meal of warm, golden-white bread and a drink of barley-beer, Nekht and Ra-Hetep hurried through the sunny streets—not pausing to watch the glittering chariots rattle past, or the trains of patient grey donkeys, laden with melons and cucumbers and sacks of corn, or the many-coloured crowds of officials and merchants, craftsmen, and labouring folk. They reached the House of Books in good time and were already squatting cross-legged on the floor, with their whitewashed writing-boards across their knees, their reed-pens beside them, and their wooden ink-trays—each with a hollow full of red and a hollow full of black ink—in their left hands, when their master took up his place in the midst of his pupils.

The first lesson that morning was a writing-lesson. Upon thin sheets of papyrus—the inner fibre of the papyrus-reed—the boys traced columns of queer-looking characters, with such unexpected shapes as those of hawks and eagles, serpents and reeds. The smaller boys were only beginning to recognize the difference between A, which was a rough sketch of a bird, and D, which had the outline of a human hand, but their elders were tracing whole sentences, proverbs and maxims, legends of the gods, and fables which were much like fairy-tales.

"Write these words," commanded the master, fingering his cane. "The words of Im-Hotep, the great and wise: *Be not haughty because of thy knowledge.*"

Twenty or thirty thin reed pens scratched carefully over as many sheets of papyrus.

"Show me now what ye have written."

One by one the boys handed up their slips of writing, watching rather anxiously to see whether their teacher were pleased—or otherwise. When he had glanced at Ra-Hetep's copy, he frowned.

"Now here," said he, "is a foolish and lazy boy, who will never have any cause to be haughty because of his knowledge."

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Swish, swish went the cane across the bare shoulders of Ra-Hetep. "Punishment," observed the master, "should be borne with a smiling face. Now, all of you, take your pens, dip them in the scarlet ink, and write in fair and regular characters these words—also spoken by the great and wise Im-Hotep: *Wisdom is harder to find than the emerald.*"

The next lesson was arithmetic, at which the elder brother was especially good. They learned something like our modern multiplication table and did simple sums in addition and subtraction. Then they had practical lessons which some of them found excellent fun. For example, they learned how to guess the area of a field, or how much corn could be stored in a granary of a certain size. Nekht loved doing this; but Ra-Hetep's attention wandered. He would rather have guessed how much corn would be needed to feed a chariot-team for a week, or a year.

When the arithmetic-lesson ended it was the hour of noon, and the boys ran out into the courtyard of the House of Books, glad to stretch their legs and eager for the nice things which they knew would be waiting for them. Nekht and Ra-Hetep thought that their mother was by far the most beautiful of the women gathered near the door with baskets woven of willow twigs in their hands. And indeed she was very beautiful, in her robe of finely woven muslin with a fringed scarlet sash, scarlet-and-gold sandals on her slender feet, and a primly curled wig on her head.

"Look, my children," she said, showing them what was inside her basket. "Honey-cakes—with caraway seeds. The cook had made so many for the feast that I thought some might be spared for my two diligent scholars at the House of Books!"

She smiled as she spoke, but her elder son took the words quite seriously.

"True, honoured mother; *I* have been *very* diligent to-day. I have written out seven maxims of Im-Hotep, and I have guessed rightly how many measures of corn could be kept in a granary eighteen cubits wide, and twenty cubits long, and twelve cubits high."

"And you, my second son?"

"I have been caned, mother. My copy was smeared, and some of the characters were wrong."

"Do better to-morrow, second son of mine. And now take

your cakes—look, one is shaped like a duck, and one like a cat—for I must hasten home and make sure that all things are ready for our feast. Farewell, my sons.”

And, followed by a slave-boy waving a huge fan of blue-and-green feathers, the scribe's wife returned to her own dwelling.

“What ‘feast’ is that, of which your gracious lady-mother was speaking?” asked one of the other scholars.

“A feast which is to be given in our house, in honour of the safe return of the messengers whom the Queen sent to the land of Punt to fetch myrrh-plants, in order to have sweet incense to burn before the images of Amen-Ra,” answered Nekht, all in one breath.

“Ah,” interposed an older friend, who had been listening, “I have heard much talk of these things at home. My mother's brother was one of the Queen's messengers. They sailed a long, long way over the sea, in five ships. And they brought back many little myrrh-trees, with their roots wrapped in straw.”

“My father knows just how many of those little trees they brought,” said Nekht proudly. “He has spent many hours down at the quayside, where the galleys are being unloaded. He counts everything, and sees the bales and boxes weighed, and writes their number and the weight of them in his book.”

“You forget that *my* father is a scribe also,” laughed the other. “And *he* has a book and a reed-pen and an ink-horn hanging at his girdle and numbers the cargoes of the ships even as your father does. He told me how many those myrrh-trees were. One-and-thirty, no less.”

“Well, then,” said Nekht, “do you know what besides myrrh-trees, ebony and ivory, and jars of fragrant oil, those galleys brought from the land of Punt?”

“That is soon told. Hounds and apes and peacocks. And one young panther.”

“Ay, but what sorts of hounds and apes?”

“That also I can tell. Small, gentle hounds with silky grey coats. Little apes with white whiskers.”

“So my father said. And he had one of the small apes in his arms. It was quite tame and chattered to him in the language of the apes. I wish I could have one for a pet.”

“I have a baby crocodile at our house in the country,”

boasted another boy, who had been listening. "It lives in the paved pond among the blue water-lilies. But my father says that when it grows bigger we shall have to put it back into the Nile."

"At our house in the country," cried Ra-Hetep, "we have two gazelles and a porcupine and a cat that goes out hunting with us and picks up the wild birds which we bring down with pebbles from our slings. We——"

But at that moment the stern voice of their teacher summoned them back to another hour of studious toil in the House of Books.

This time there were different lessons for different classes of boys. Some were learning to draw and others to recite by heart long texts from the Book of the Dead, the Bible of Ancient Egypt. Nekht was in the first class, and his younger brother in the second. Instead of papyrus, the young artist had thin slabs of limestone upon which to draw, using fine brushes dipped in black ink. He was allowed to trace a network of squares all over the surface of his stone slab and to fit the design into these—a method very similar to that sometimes employed by modern black-and-white artists.

On this particular afternoon Nekht was copying a sketch of a young man. It did not seem to him at all strange that both the model's feet pointed stiffly in the same direction and on exactly the same level, or that, though his face was shown from the side, his eye was drawn from the front, so that he looked more like a bird than a human being. That was the way in which the Queen's own painters depicted figures of men and women, and for many centuries all Egyptian painters followed that quaint plan. Sculptors were more enterprising, and carved lifelike statues long before artists had thought of trying to make their pictures look natural.

Nekht liked drawing, and he bent earnestly over his task. But he had begun to learn only that year, and he was not as yet very skilful, so when the master came to look at the finished sketch, he found it far from perfect.

"Foolish boy," said the master. "If such a man as you have drawn were to come walking along the street, we should all run away. His eye is too large, his nose is too long, his legs are too short. He is like such a figure as one might see in a dream—and not a pleasant dream. Give me a clean brush. Where is your red ink? Now, look——"

And with a few firm strokes he showed his pupil where and how he had gone wrong.

"I see now, O my master," said Nekht. "May I try again?"

"Yes, you may always try again. But it is fortunate for you that you are to be a scribe and not a painter, for I do not think any great prince or rich merchant would employ you to decorate the walls of his house or the inside of his family tomb. No, I do not think so."

He moved on to the next pupil, and Nekht returned to his task. The boy did not feel hurt at his teacher's remark, for the good man had always a sharp tongue, but deep in his heart he could not help thinking that to be a painter would be almost as interesting as to be a scribe. The walls of the great tombs hewn out of the limestone cliffs near Thebes were gay with paintings, for the Egyptians believed that the spirits of the dead visited these places sometimes and liked to see pictures of such scenes as they had once known so well. On one wall you would see a feast, with guests wearing garlands and musicians playing harps and pipes; on another would be reapers working in a cornfield, or scribes watching the weighing of bales, or stewards counting herds of cattle and flocks of geese.

The houses of the living were as highly painted as the dwellings of the dead. On the wall of the room where Nekht and Ra-hetep slept there were designs chosen by the father and mother to make the children laugh when they looked at them. One such design showed a cat driving some geese along, and in another a large hippopotamus was sitting up at table. Yet another showed a lion and a unicorn playing draughts. Nekht wondered if he could ever paint anything quite as funny as that, or quite as beautiful as the wall of his mother's room, with its cool blue stream full of grey-and-white fishes, and its willow and tamarisk trees with little brown and tawny birds among the interlaced branches. Perhaps not. But one thing he could do, and that was to shorten the too-long nose of the drawing he had just made. By the time he had finished, school was over for the day, and the two boys joyfully laid down their pens and brushes and papyrus scrolls.

Meanwhile their only sister, Nefert (beauty), who was nearly twelve years old, had been helping their mother to arrange freshly cut lotus-lilies in big jars of blue-glazed pottery.

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In his kitchen the cook was busy putting the final touches to the dinner, stirring the soup, turning the geese on the spit, sprinkling the caraway seeds on the muffin-shaped wheaten cakes. And the lady of the house was giving final instructions to her slaves as to what they should do when the guests began to arrive.

Nekht and Ra-Hetep, as soon as they got home, were whisked away by the elderly woman-slave who had been their nurse when they were babies, and who now combed and oiled



EGYPTIAN COOKS AND BAKERS AT WORK
From the tomb of Ramesses III

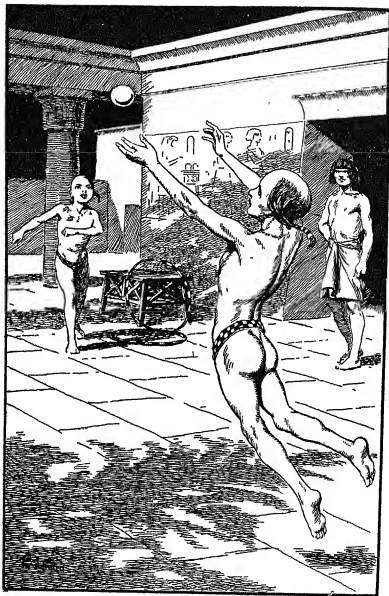
and re-braided their side-locks with vigorous fingers, at the same time telling them not to eat too much if kind grown-ups should offer them morsels of the feast.

"Not too many bites of melon, I pray you," she said. "Not too many tit-bits of quail and goose and cucumber. Remember how sick you both were last year after just such a treat as this."

"Oh, last year," retorted Nekht, scornfully. "Why, I was only a little boy then—only eight years old—and I didn't know any better."

"And I was only seven," added his brother. "Never fear, good nurse. We are very nearly grown-up now, and we know better than to eat too much."

The old nurse, who was as wise in her own way as the great Im-Hotep had been in his, made no answer to these remarks. Well she knew that people who were quite old enough to know better were sometimes so foolish and greedy as to stuff themselves with too much good fare.



THEY LOVED TO PLAY GAMES WITH HOOPS AND BALLS

THE CHILDREN OF THE QUEEN'S SCRIBE

"The gods are kind to such as you," said she. "When I and my biethren were your age we had never tasted roast goose or honey-cake. We thought ourselves lucky if we had lentils and onions to eat—and luckier still if we had enough of either."

"Oh, but you were lucky," declared Nekht. "You helped to reap and glean, and you drove the oxen, and you worked the *shaduf* which raises buckets of water from the Nile. You have often told us these things."

"Yea, and I have often told you how it makes one's back ache to glean, and one's feet ache to press down the treadle of the *shaduf* so that the heavy bucket shall be pulled up."

"Old nurse," said the younger boy, who was the kinder-hearted of the two, "I will save some sweetmeats for you, if I can."

"And the gods bless you, my child. Now go, both of you, to your own room and play with your toys till your lady-mother sends word that it is time for you to appear."

Nothing loth, they scampered off and were soon enjoying themselves with their favourite wooden horses and hippopotami and their yellow-painted lion which snapped its jaws fiercely when you pulled a string. These were their chief delight indoors, but out of doors they loved to run and wrestle and play games with hoops and balls.

Now, when they had played for a little while with their toys, the elder boy challenged the younger to the guessing-game. This ancient game is still played by the people of Naples, who call it *mora*. Each player has to try to guess the number of fingers held up by the other, and thus sometimes leads to contradictions and then to quarrels, especially when bets are made on the result of the game.

The two sons of Ka-Tep the scribe were quite good friends as a rule, but over the guessing-game they sometimes came to blows, so that when they were in the charge of their old nurse they were seldom allowed to play it. She told them many stories of friendships which had been broken and fortunes lost because of foolish disputes or even more foolish wagers, but the elder boy, who thought things out for himself, used to answer, "But, old nurse, Ra-Hetep and I shall always be brothers. Being a brother is different from being a friend. And if we only bet a wooden hoop or an old leather ball stuffed

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

with ducks' feathers, we shall not die in poverty like those folk of whom you tell us."

On this particular day, old nurse was helping the lady of the house, and so was too busy to keep an eye on the small boys. Presently thumps and bangs and excited cries were heard coming from their room.

"Run, old nurse," said their mother. "My sons are fighting again—they will have bleeding noses and knuckles, instead of being clean and seemly as I wished them to be. Run, old nurse."

Just because she was old the nurse did not find it easy to run; but she shuffled away on her withered bare feet as fast as she could and arrived in time to prevent the boys from doing each other more damage than the ruffling of their neatly oiled and braided side-locks.

"Ay me, ay me," she sighed. "Were ever such wild lions! If you act thus, we shall have Prince Thothmes going forth to hunt you some fine morning, with his great bow-and-arrow."

"That is all Prince Thothmes is good for—to go out hunting," muttered Ra-Hetep.

"What words are these, my child?" asked the nurse, looking much shocked, for this prince was the kinsman of Queen Hatshepsut, and would be Pharaoh, or King of Upper and Lower Egypt, when she died.

"I meant no harm, old nurse. But I have heard people say that it is shameful that a man should allow a woman to have all the power, and to bear rule. The Queen is everything, and he is nothing."

"Peace, my child, and stand still while I finish braiding this lock. All this talk of queens and princes is not for little boys. The Queen is a great queen. Perhaps some day, if the gods so will, the prince may be a great king. These are mighty matters, and a word spoken amiss may bring much evil."

Ra-Hetep exchanged a grin with his brother. They both knew that the old nurse liked nothing better than to discuss these "mighty matters" with the other slaves, but that she thought it was her duty to discourage such talk in her charges.

Suddenly they all heard a distant twanging sound. The minstrels who were to entertain the guests had taken up their post at the top of the room, and the harpers were tuning their harps. The 'band' consisted of three harpers, two pipe-

THE CHILDREN OF THE QUEEN'S SCRIBE

players, a cymbalist, and three singers. There would also be acrobats and dancers, but they did not appear till later on.

"Go now, my children," said the nurse, pushing the two boys towards the door. "Stand on either side of your noble father when he greets the great ones who come to feast with him. Do as he does, bow when he bows. But do not speak until someone speaks to you—and do *not* eat too much melon and cucumber."

And now, at last, the exciting moment came when the bewigged and perfumed gentlemen and ladies began to enter two by two, with cheerful smiles upon their dark brown faces. At once slaves darted forward and flung a garland of pink lotus-lilies over the shoulders of each guest. Other slaves brought wreaths for their heads, arranging these carefully so that a bud or a blossom hung down in the centre of the forehead. And yet other slaves balanced on the top of every person's wig a lump of grease and spikenard which was to remain there the whole evening, slowly melting and trickling down through the stiff ringlets.

Ka-Tep and his wife, the gracious 'Nebt-Pa,' or lady of the house, received their friends with graceful gestures and conducted them to their places. There was no central table with chairs round it. People sat by ones and twos upon broad chairs with gilded legs, padded seats, and straight backs, and slaves brought them bowls and plates of food and goblets of wine. At the top of the room was a sort of sideboard with three shelves. On the top shelf were piles of delicious fruits—melons, figs, dates, mulberries, and grapes, on the middle shelf were large, deep dishes containing roast duck, roast goose, stewed lamb, and gazelle-meat cooked with herbs and spices. Beneath stood the tall jars full of dark-coloured, sweet-flavoured wine. There were also small loaves of bread, and a great variety of delightful little cakes made with honey and sprinkled with caraway seeds or dried fruit. All Egyptians liked simple little jokes, and the cook would often do what Ka-Tep's cook had done—mould the cake-mixture into fanciful shapes before putting it in the oven, so that some would come out like cats, crocodiles, or birds, others like pyramids, huts, or hemispheres.

Nefert and her brothers stood quietly beside their parents till all the guests were seated, and at a sign from Ka-Tep the banquet began. Then the little girl planted herself on a low

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

stool at their mother's feet, and each boy took a similar low stool on either side of their father.

The place of honour was given to an elderly man with a thoughtful, clever face. Upon his broad shoulders rested a golden collar with an inscription stating that it had been given by Queen Hatshepsut to her faithful servant, Sennemut, tutor to the young Prince Thothmes. It was Sennemut who had made all the plans for the Queen's great expedition to the land of Punt, who had gone himself on that perilous journey and returned in triumph with five shiploads of plants, animals, and ivory. Hatshepsut had seen in a dream the god Amen-Ra telling her to fetch from that far land myrrh-trees from which to make incense to be burned in the mighty temple she had built for him near Thebes, and everyone felt that the god had shown that he was well pleased both with the obedience of the queen and the faith and courage of her servants.

"Greatly do you honour my house, O Sennemut," said Ka-Tep, "and long will this day be remembered. My children will tell their children that Sennemut, the favoured of the mighty Queen Hatshepsut, sat at meat with their father and mother, and that with their own eyes they beheld him."

"To sit at meat with Ka-Tep and the noble Nebt-Pa is itself an honour," returned the chief guest politely. And he added, with a glance at the two boys and with a twinkle in his eye: "And as for your two hopeful sons, they would rather behold such honey-cakes as these than the face of an old man stained with travel."

As he spoke he handed a honey-cake to each boy.

"Sennemut is gracious and our sons are happy," said the lady of the house, smiling.

"And," remarked the great man, noticing that Nefert had been forgotten, "unless my travels have made me foolish as well as weary, it is not only little boys who like honey-cakes. With your leave, Nebt-Pa, I will give this fig, which is plump, sweet, and purple, to your daughter."

Then all the children were content, for each had something good to nibble while listening to the talk of their elders.

"Is it true, O Sennemut," asked their mother, with interest, "that the Queen of Punt is a very fat queen?"

"She is a very fat queen," replied Sennemut. "So fat that if it were not disloyal to our own queen I would call her the fattest in the world."

THE CHILDREN OF THE QUEEN'S SCRIBE

"And is it true, O Sennemut, that her eyes were painted after a strange fashion, with dark blue stain upon the upper and the lower lid, so that her beauty was very great?"

"It is true, O Nebt-Pa. And of that same eye-paint I brought certain jars home for the use of our own great queen."

"Our wives," remarked Ka-Tep, "are all wishing that you had loaded your five ships with nothing else. Then there would have been enough to go round, and they would all have been as beautiful as the Queen of Punt."

This made the ladies laugh, though some of them declared that they had wished nothing of the kind. Then their husbands began to discuss the more serious and practical side of the expedition and to talk of the ebony logs, the rings of pale gold, the leopard skins and other rare goods which it had brought to Egypt. Nekht listened with interest to as much of this as he could understand. It was real scribes' talk, and as a future scribe he felt that he ought to listen. Ra-Hetep, however, was looking wistfully towards the lower end of the room, where his uncle, the captain of the queen's chariots, was sitting.

Both boys were pleased when the subject of hunting came up, for every well-to-do Egyptian was a keen hunter from the time of his childhood. The desert teemed with game, big and small, and with the aid of clubs, bows-and-arrows, boomerangs, axes, and spears, men pursued and killed lions and lynxes, leopards and wolves, jackals, hyenas, and gazelles. A very swift and clever dog, with sharp ears and a long, curling tail, was used in hunting—a type of dog still to be seen in the present century, and now called a Seluki.

"Well," said one of the guests, "it is good sport to chase the wild beasts that dwell on either side of the great and holy river of Egypt. But to my mind there is none better than to go fowling and fishing among the tall reeds, with a sharp harpoon and a well-wrought boomerang and a well-trained cat. I have a famous cat. When I bring down a wild-fowl with my boomerang, she is off like a streak of lightning to fetch it back to me. You have seen her at work, Ka-Tep."

"Indeed I have. She is fleet, fierce, and obedient," said Ka-Tep, who was too polite to confess that in his opinion his own favourite cat, Mai-Sheraui (little pussy), was even better. This opinion was shared by Nekht and his brother, who had

been out fowling both with their father and with his friend, and who now whispered to each other across Ka-Tep's footstool that no cat could equal Mai-Sherau.

Mai-Sherau herself was sitting demurely in a corner, attracted by the smell of roast goose but too well brought-up to come and rub herself against the legs of the guests and beg for tit-bits. Nefert, seeing this, quietly held out the drumstick of a goose which her mother had just slipped into her hand, and pussy came stepping daintily, taking care not to trip up the slaves who were bringing fresh garlands and more jugs of wine.

"There, my pretty," whispered Nefert, as the cat began to purr gratefully over the bone. "Is not that nice?"

"Yes, it is, thank you," answered Mai-Sherau, in her own language.

But she was not allowed to finish her treat in peace. At a sign from Ka-Tep the musicians began to play, and the singers to sing.

"O hush, Mai-Sherau," murmured Nefert, as she felt the silky back arching itself under her hand. "If you make a noise now, they will drive you out."

But the music was too much for Mai-Sherau. She joined her own voice to the voices of the performers, and every head was turned towards her.

"Take the cat away," commanded the Nebt-Pa, beckoning one of the slaves, "and tell old nurse to see to it that she neither returns, nor miaows outside the door."

Protesting indignantly, Mai-Sherau was carried off, and the concert went on with no more interruptions, except the polite remarks of the guests or an occasional low-toned snatch of talk.

The singers, who knelt squatting in a row, were all blind, so they could not see the animal who had tried to sing with them, but there was no mistaking her notes for those of anything but a cat, and two of them, good-natured men, smiled, while the less kindly third shrugged his bare shoulders crossly.

Nekht wondered what it would feel like to be blind and kept his eyes tightly shut for what seemed to him a long time, but was really only about a minute and a half. Ra-Hetep was thinking how much finer was the music made by the drummers and trumpeters of Queen Hatshepsut's foot-soldiers and wish-

THE CHILDREN OF THE QUEEN'S SCRIBE

ing that he could ask his uncle if he did not agree with him.

Nefert was listening with great interest to the tales of charms and spells and wonderful dreams which her mother was exchanging with two other ladies, while their husbands continued to talk about sport, trade, and foreign affairs. There was often trouble between Egypt and her neighbours in Western Asia; Hittites, Babylonians, Assyrians. But these things interested none of the children unless they led to wars, when Ra-Hetep wanted to know all about the chariots and the bowmen, and the javelin-throwers.

"Yes," one of the ladies was saying, as she raised a thick slice of cucumber to her lips in her scarlet-stained fingers, "it is a great joy for my sister Netchemet. For she had much desired to have a child, and her lord, Sutui, also. And they had prayed to Amen-Ra and made offerings in his temple, all in vain."

"And now they have two fair sons!" said the lady of the house. "That is truly a great joy."

She glanced at her own sons, who were beginning to grow sleepy and were leaning their small shaven heads against their father's chair.

"It was a spell—a charm—which brought the answer to their prayer," whispered her friend. "Magic words, written on a leaf of papyrus, and flung by moonlight into the Nile near the temple of the goddess Re-Nenit. And that same night my sister dreamed a dream, and lo! there were in her hand two ears of corn. And the next night she dreamed another dream, and lo! there were in her hand two lotus-lilies. And the third night she dreamed yet again, and upon her knees were two goodly babes. Whereby she knew that the goddess had heard her prayer. And the third dream came true."

Nekht, who had heard the end of the story, opened his eyes, leaned forward, and poked his brother in the ribs.

"Brother," he whispered, "did you hear that? And last night I dreamed that I had for my very own one of the little apes that my lord Sennemut brought from the land of Punt. Do you think *my* dream will come true also?"

Ra-Hetep did not answer, for he was getting drowsy, and he remembered dimly that the night before he had dreamed that he had forgotten his lessons with dreadful results—a much worse beating than he had received that morning in the House

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

of Books. Did that mean that little boys' dreams did or did not come true? Ra-Hetep had no idea, so he said nothing.

Ka-Tep glanced down and saw that the children were no longer as wide awake as they had been only a little while before. He clapped his hands and bade the slave who hurried forward tell old nurse to come and take all three to bed. When Ra-Hetep heard the order he stretched up his hand and begged in a low voice for one more honey-cake, with dried figs in it.

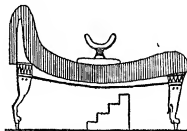
"There, greedy one," said his mother, as she gave it to him. "But do not eat it in bed, or it may choke you."

Then old nurse came quietly in, bowing low, and the children rose from their little footstools and bent their heads three times to the company. Some of the guests spoke kindly words, such as "Amen-Ra guard ye, little ones!" Others merely nodded and smiled. From the farther end of the room the charioteer waved his hand to his younger nephew, who was his favourite.

Old nurse, who was very strong though she was old, picked Ra-Hetep up in her arms, for she could see that he was now so sleepy he could hardly stand, and, followed by Nefert and Nekht, she carried him away.

As she laid him down upon his sycamore bed Ra-hetep half opened his eyes and slipped something into her hand.

"For you, old nurse," he murmured, "a honey-cake—with dried figs in it. I did not forget"



AN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN BED WITH
HEAD-REST AND STEPS

IV

A GARLAND OVER THE DOOR

438 B.C.

A COLD March wind was blowing as the sun rose over the grey rock of the Acropolis, a wind that swooped down upon the city of Athens, lying at the foot of the rock, and made the dust whirl among its two-storeyed houses of dull pink brick. Such Athenians as were already up and about gathered their woollen cloaks more tightly round them. Presently, when the day was not so new, the air would be warm and bright, and the pillars of the Acropolis temples would take on a rich, pale golden colour; but at this early hour the world both looked and felt decidedly bleak and dreary.

In one of the pink brick houses a ten-year-old Greek boy called Ageladas was pushing his long hair back from his forehead and wondering in a sleepy way why the slaves were pattering from one room to another so much earlier than usual. The couch on which he lay had a framework of bronze, and the blankets of saffron-yellow wool had been woven and spun by his mother and her women slaves. His little cloak hung from a peg in the door, and in a corner by the window were huddled together his sandals, his toy-cart, and the wooden tablet coated with wax which he took with him to school. Shelves and cupboards were unknown in Athenian houses two thousand four hundred years ago, and all sorts of things were flung down in all sorts of places, with the result that when any member of the family was



GREEK BOY

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

looking for something he wanted there was a great deal of scrambling and fumbling, and much time was lost.

"It is a cold morning," thought Ageladas, "and the daylight is still grey. I need not wake yet."

But even as he pulled the blanket up over his head, the door opened and one of the women slaves of the household peeped in.

"Ageladas," she said, in an excited whisper, "get up. Eurycleia has something to show you."

"Is it something nice?" asked the boy.

"Very nice. It is alive, too."

In a moment Ageladas was on his feet.

"Alive! Is it a puppy? Is it a tortoise? I hope it is a puppy. Father said I might have one. Tortoises are so stupid. Tell me, is it a puppy?"

The woman smiled and set down the jar of warm water which she carried.

"Nay, I must not tell you. Eurycleia forbade me. Hurry now. Bath yourself. Then come to the room with blue walls."

Ageladas always hurried over his bath when Eurycleia, his old nurse, was not at hand to make sure that he washed himself carefully. Now a hasty splash in lukewarm water was all he waited to have before he flung his cloak round him and set off for the room with blue walls. To reach this room he had to cross the hall of the house, in the centre of which a fire, sacred to the goddess Hestia, was kept constantly burning. This goddess was the guardian of the home, the hearth was her altar, and the fire was a sign of her power. Ageladas knew that when he was a five-day-old baby his father had taken him in his arms and had run swiftly round the flaming hearth, so that Hestia should look with favour upon the new inmate of the house and watch over him while he was learning to walk and run.

As he crossed the hall he saw that the street-door was open, and that his father was standing on tiptoe, fastening something above it.

In the room with blue walls Ageladas found Eurycleia sitting in her own low chair. She was a very old woman who had been nurse to the master of the house when he was a child, and her wise, kindly face was crinkled with hundreds of little lines which grew deeper when she smiled—as she did

now. The boy, eagerly looking for the puppy which he hoped to see, did not at first do more than glance hastily at the nurse, but when she called him softly by his name he went to her. He saw that on her knees was a little bundle which moved, and by her side was standing a deep bronze bowl, filled with water upon the surface of which floated a thin film of olive oil.

"Oh," said Ageladas, sadly, "it is only a baby! I hoped it would be a puppy."

"Nay," returned Eurycleia, "you will have better sport with a little brother than you would have with a little dog. Look at him, Ageladas—even such a babe were you when first I held you upon my knee."

The boy bent and peered at the small pink face, with its tiny knob of a nose and its mouth open wide to let out a feeble cry.

"Was I really as ugly as that?" he asked.

"Ugly! You were not ugly, nor is he ugly. He is a fair babe and will grow up into a tall, strong man even as his father is. He has just had his bath, and now, before I take him to his mother, I must hang these things round his neck, so that he may be saved from all danger."

"These things" were little dangling charms of bronze strung on a thin chain; among them were swords, pigs, human hands, and crescent moons. While she was putting them on the baby, the old nurse gently rocked him upon her knees, and he soon stopped crying.

"He looks better now that he has shut his mouth," said Ageladas, critically.

"He will look better still in a moment," promised Eurycleia. She took a small pointed cap, made of the softest wool, and fitted it gently on the fluffy head.

"There," said she, "now he is a fine man, and a good little Athenian."

"He has no teeth," objected Ageladas. "A fine man should have lots of teeth. Had I no teeth when I was as young as he?"

"Not a single tooth. And even less hair. Now go and have your breakfast. I must carry this young sir to the women's quarters."



GREEK BABY

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

"Has my sister seen him?"

"Not yet. It was right that you, his elder brother, should see him first."

Ageladas, feeling very important, walked gravely away. Eurycleia, with the baby in her arms, hobbled off to the women's quarters, where the lady of the house and her seven-year-old daughter spent most of their time. There Ageladas himself had lived until he reached the age of seven, when he was handed over to his *paidagogos*, the stern elderly slave whose duty it was to bring him up in the way he should go.

For breakfast the boy had wheaten bread, a sort of broth sweetened with honey, barley-porridge, and goats' milk cheese. The *paidagogos*, a bearded personage with a sharp eye and a deep voice, watched over him, and uttered a growling rebuke if he saw any fault in his charge's table manners.

"Have you heard," asked Ageladas, "that we have a new child in this house?"

"I have heard. But even if we had *ten* new children Ageladas should not speak with his mouth stuffed with porridge, or take his bread with his right instead of his left hand."

Ageladas gulped. Then he started off again.

"I am sorry it is not a puppy, but I am glad it is a brother. One sister is enough. When will he be old enough to walk and talk, and play games with me in the garden?"

"Not yet awhile. And by the time that he is of an age to be handed over to *me*, Ageladas will have cut off his long curls and made an offering to the god Herakles, whereby men will know that he has left childish things behind him."

"That will be good," said Ageladas, nodding vigorously. "And it will be good when I am eighteen, and they enrol me among the *Ephēbi*, and I begin my training as a defender of Athens."

"To that day all boys look forward," remarked the *paidagogos*, rather gruffly. "Yes, they all look forward to it, not remembering that it means certain years of hardship and absence from home and long marches and constant drilling—and maybe war and death."

"I am not afraid of war and death," said Ageladas. "My father says that no boy whose grandfather fought for Athens against the Persians at Marathon should fear such things. When this new child is old enough I will teach him to play

A GARLAND OVER THE DOOR

Greeks and Persians with me. My sister Doricha is no good at playing Greeks and Persians. She always wants to be a Greek because the Greeks won, and she likes best to win."

"That is natural," remarked the *paidagogos*, "and you will find the same desire in your brother, when he is old enough to make his thoughts known. Now it is time to go to school. Fetch your comb that I may make sure that your locks are smooth and straight."

As Ageladas went to get his comb he met his father in the hall.

"Well, my son," said that important personage, laying his hand on the boy's head. "Have you seen your brother?"

"Yes, my father. And Eurycleia says I was just such a child when first she held me on her knee. With no teeth, my father—and hardly any hair."

"So, no doubt, you were. And so, no doubt, was I."

The thought that his tall father, one of the leading citizens of Athens, one of the judges of the ancient law-court held on the hill called the Areopagus, had also been a small, unimpressive infant once upon a time was very consoling to Ageladas. He smiled as he said:

"What is his name, my father?"

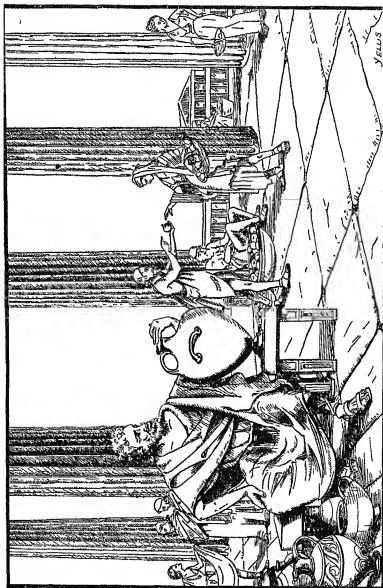
"That you will hear ten days hence, when we will make sacrifice for him to the gods, and our friends and kinsfolk will bring him gifts and garlands and will feast with us. Hark, I hear your *paidagogos* calling you—obey him, my son."

As Ageladas stepped into the street, with his hair neatly combed and his cloak correctly wrapped round him, he saw that what his father had been hanging up over the door of the house was a wreath of olive leaves. He remembered that such a wreath was a sign of rejoicing, and meant that a baby boy had been born in the house where it hung.

"*Paidagogos*," said he, addressing his companion. "If the new child had been a girl and not a boy, would they have put such a garland up?"

"Certainly not," returned the *paidagogos*, firmly. "It is a sign of joy. There is little joy when a girl is born, and they hang up a fillet of wool so that their friends may know that there will be no great merry-making."

"And yet I am sure my father and my mother love my sister Doricha very much."



A GARLAND OVER THE DOOR

"No doubt. Even as we read in the *Odyssey* that the maiden Nausicaa was loved by the king and queen, her father and mother. But she had brothers, even as Doricha has brothers. The worst misfortune is when the woollen fillet is hung up often and the olive garland never."

The sun had now driven away the grey morning clouds, and the wind had dropped. There were many people in the streets, some on their way to work, some bound for the marketplace where the merchants met, some on shopping-expeditions. The various shopkeepers were grouped according to the wares they sold, all the fishmongers in one street, all the shoemakers in another, and so forth. This made it easy for purchasers to see at a glance what was for sale that day, and where the best was to be found.

As his *paidagogos* and he passed along the street of the fishmongers, Ageladas thought of his father's words about a feast. "I hope," he remarked, "that we shall have lots of cuttlefish and eels ten days hence, when they hold a banquet for the naming of the new child."

"No doubt," answered his companion; "and cuttlefish will be brought as a gift by some of the guests. It is considered a fortunate gift at such a time. And there will be stewed thrushes and baked hares and fine wine from Chios."

"Did they have all those good things for my feast, when they gave me my name?"

"I cannot tell. I was not there. Ten years ago I was *paidagogos* to a boy who is now a grown man and a famous sea-captain. It was because he heard how well I had brought this boy up that your father made me his servant. But this I have told you before."

"Yea, and very often," said Ageladas, but under his breath,



GREEK GIRL

for the *paidagogos* carried a long and strong stick and could give sharp knocks with it when he was annoyed.

"By the same token," pursued that worthy man, "this other boy of whom I speak would never have slouched along awkwardly as Ageladas does, nor would he have worn his cloak trailing down to his heels. Stop, child, and put it right."

Ageladas stopped and pulled up the cloak so vigorously that the greater part of it was bunched over his left shoulder or humped round his neck, leaving his short tunic of crinkly woven linen uncovered.

"Fie for shame," growled the *paidagogos*, rapping his stick on the pavement. "Now you look like some rough country lad who has come up from his village with a basket of radishes to sell. Here, let me put it right."

While he was tugging the garment into the correct folds, they were overtaken by another bearded slave escorting another boy, about the same age as Ageladas, but taller and darker. The two elders exchanged nods and dropped behind for a chat, while their two charges, who were bound for the same school, walked ahead.

"Greeting, Ageladas," said the dark boy. "I have something to tell you. My father has given me a pet duck. She is so tame she will follow me round the garden."

"A pet duck?" echoed Ageladas. "Oh, that's nothing much. We have got something far more amusing at home."

"More amusing than my duck? But you have not seen her. You have not heard her quack."

"We," said Ageladas proudly, "we have got a new child." The dark boy was impressed.

"Oh, have you! We had one two years ago. But it was only a girl, so there was no great feast for her naming."

"Ours is a boy. If you go past our house you will see the olive garland hanging over the door."

The school was held in a large, one-storeyed building near the market-place. As physical training played an important part in the Greek system of education, there was always in such a building a sort of hall called the *palaestra*, not unlike a modern gymnasium, where the boys were taught wrestling, jumping, throwing spears at targets, and flinging flat metal discs as far as they could. Ageladas and his friend were both keen on such lessons, and no sooner had each *paidagogos* seated

himself upon the bench reserved for them than their two charges were stripping off their tunics and beginning to rub themselves all over with olive oil

As soon as their supple, wiry young bodies were shiny from head to heel they sprinkled each other with fine sand and, under the eye of what we might now call the 'games-master,' their wrestling-bout began. According to the rules the wrestler was beaten who had been three times thrown down by his adversary. Ageladas and the dark boy, whose name was Diomedes, were so well matched as regards strength and skill (though Diomedes was the taller) that they had been struggling for some time before either had been overthrown. They got a little out of breath, and their instructor called out sharply, "Do not puff and blow—you are making noises like the bellows which the smith uses to make his fire blaze up. Manage your breathing better. If you should ever fight at the Olympic Games you do not want the spectators to laugh at you."

When Diomedes had been down twice and Ageladas once, the master decided that the lesson had lasted long enough, and he sent the two breathless and rumple-headed boys away to plunge into a deep bath of cold water. First the film of oil and sand was scraped off their skins with the aid of an implement called in Greek a *stleggis*. With their long hair combed, their tunics and cloaks properly adjusted, and their tablets in their hands, they then went to the room where their writing-master was waiting for them. Nine or ten other boys, some older and some younger, were already there, and six who had also been wrestling in the *palastra* entered with them. Each pupil had a high stool to sit on, but neither desk nor table, and each had to stand in a respectful attitude while he was being examined by his teacher, with his hands hidden in his cloak or folded behind his back.

On a bronze chair ornamented with griffins sat the master, with a long, knotted stick close to his hand. When Ageladas and Diomedes came in, he was already busy ruling lines on the waxed tablets with the aid of a metal implement called a *stylus*. The late-comers had to wait their turn, and when every boy had his boxwood tablet on his knee and his own *stylus* in his hand, the lesson began.

First the pupils repeated the Greek alphabet in a sort of sing-song chant, and then they recited a few very simple

grammatical rules. After this they inscribed lists of words on their tablets between the lines traced by their teacher. They divided each word in two, so that its root and its various endings could be seen at a glance; the unchanging part being on one side of an upright line, and the changeable part on the other. Ageladas liked this lesson; it seemed to him like a sort of game.

Then, one by one, the boys had to go and stand before the teacher and repeat some lines from the *Iliad* of Homer. Diomedes was good at this, for he loved to think of the Greeks and the Trojans of long ago fighting over the city of Troy; of their valiant deeds, and how gods and goddesses fought also, some for Troy and some against it. He had a good memory, too, and the knotted stick was seldom brandished over his head. But when Ageladas took his place things did not go so well. The lines he had had to learn by heart were those describing how the river Scamander had risen and overflowed its banks, and how the god Hephestus, in order to make it fall again, had breathed flame upon it until the little fishes were much puzzled to find themselves in such hot and shallow water, getting hotter and shallower every minute.

It suddenly struck Ageladas as funny, this bewilderment of the poor fishes, and he burst out laughing.

"Profane boy," cried his master, clutching his stick, "irreverent child, the great Homer is *not* a comic poet! He did not sing of gods and heroes in order to make foolish children laugh. Nor did the noble Peisistratus, ruler of Athens, cause the poems of Homer to be put into writing for the amusement of witless and badly brought-up babes."

At the words 'badly brought-up,' which were spoken in a loud, fierce voice, the *paidagogos* responsible for the upbringing of Ageladas frowned and gripped his big stick. He felt that his charge had brought public shame upon him, and he was much annoyed. Ageladas himself glanced rather anxiously towards the corner where these stern men were sitting and hoped that before the lesson was over he might win some words of praise which would soften the displeasure of his particular guardian.

When each boy had recited his portion of the *Iliad* and received his share of good or bad marks, a writing-lesson began. The smaller boys, those of eight and nine years old, wrote upon wooden, waxed tablets only, but the older ones

were learning to write upon papyrus or parchment, except those boys who were going to be soldiers or sailors, and whose deeds were to be unconnected with the arts of peace. The future law-givers, teachers, philosophers, and state officials had harder lessons to learn and more difficult tasks to fulfil.

Both Diomedes and Ageladas were intended by their parents for some learned profession, and already Diomedes had had the thrill of plying pen and ink. Now came the turn of his friend, who had never handled those things before.

"Go, boy, to your *paidagogos*," said the master, "and take from him your writing-materials—if he has brought them for you."

"Assuredly I have brought them," growled the *paidagogos*, as Ageladas drew near. "I have brought them every day for the past month, waiting for the time when a lazy boy would be thought worthy to learn their use."

He handed over to the blushing Ageladas a sheet of papyrus, shiny, strong, stiff and brown, a pen made of a hollow reed, and a little red clay pot full of black ink. The papyrus had been brought from Egypt, the ink was made of fluid crushed from oak-galls.

Feeling very important, Ageladas carried these things back to his place. This was going to be much better fun than scratching the waxed wood! And then his master called him and wrote down what he was to copy.

For a time he copied very carefully what his master had written, shaping each character slowly, and enjoying the soft scraping sound of the reed-pen over the papyrus. But presently he grew rather careless, and the next thing that happened was that he made a large blot on the edge of the sheet.

At first he was alarmed. Then he noticed, as the ink dried, that the outline of the blot was rather like his master's head, and he could not resist the temptation to add two more little blots to form the nose and chin, and then another where a tuft of hair stuck up from the master's forehead. The boy next to him saw that he was up to some prank and craned his neck until he could see what the prank was. Then he grinned and nodded, to show that he recognized the portrait.

It was not so amusing, however, when the moment came to take the papyrus up for inspection. Luckily the teacher was

in a good temper and—even more luckily—he did not see any likeness between the blot and himself.

"Ageladas," he said gravely. "You will never be a good penman if you dash your ink about in this clumsy fashion. A boy from Boeotia, where the folk are famous for their clumsiness, could hardly have done worse. But as it is the first time you have written with ink, I will not punish you. Try to do better to-morrow."

Ageladas bowed his head and removed himself and his spoiled papyrus as quickly as he could.

Lessons were now over for the day, and each *paidagogos* was seeking out his own particular charge, to make him ready for the homeward walk. Diomedes and Ageladas found no difficulty in going home together, as their two guardians were old friends and always glad of a chance for a chat, and for the greater part of the way they followed the same road.

"What are you going to do this afternoon, Ageladas?" asked the older boy, as they set off.

"My *paidagogos* is bringing me back to school for a music lesson," returned Ageladas. "And after that I think I may play in the garden with Doricha my sister for a little while. And you?"

"I am to spend an hour in the *palaestra* practising the high jump and the long jump. Will you keep a secret if I tell you one?"

"I swear by the owl of Athena," said Ageladas, raising his right hand.

This satisfied Diomedes, for no Athenian boy would have broken a vow sworn by the favourite bird of the patron goddess of the city.

"Well, then," whispered the boy, "when the Olympic Games are held next year, there is some talk that I may take part in the race for boys under twelve."

"At the Olympic Games? Oh, wonderful! And, if you win, your statue will be set up in the olive-grove near the stadium, and your victory will be cried aloud by the heralds!"

"Even if I do not win," said Diomedes, grinning a little shyly at the idea of his own statue being set up, "even if I do not win, it would be good sport to go to Olympia with my father and see the chariot races and the wrestling matches and watch the prize-winners being crowned with parsley."

"It would be good sport," agreed Ageladas. "Let us play

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at crowning the victor the next time we play together. There is some parsley in our garden, I know."

"So there is in ours. Ask your *paidagogos* if you may come and play with me to-morrow, Ageladas."

Ageladas stopped short, and when the two bearded figures drew level with him and Diomedes, he spoke coaxingly to his own guardian.

"Pray, may I play with Diomedes in his father's garden to-morrow?"

"What say you, Geta?" asked the *paidagogos*, turning to his companion. "Would that be well?"

"I am willing," returned Geta, "and so, no doubt, would my master be. But let some of the games they play be such as make young eyes quick and young limbs nimbly. Let them play at *thams* and *apporaxis*."

These were both ball-games. In the first, the player threw the ball as high into the air as he could, and his adversary tried to catch it as it came down; in the second, the ball was bounced, and each bounce was counted until another player patted it back with the open palm of his hand.

The boys promised that they would play both these games and then said 'good-bye' to each other for the time being.

After so active a morning Ageladas was hungry, but before he ate he went to the blue room to have another peep at his new brother. The baby had now been laid in a wicker cradle shaped like one of the baskets in which grain was carried after being winnowed. He was fast asleep, one small fist clutching the bronze pig which Eurycleia had hung round his neck that morning. The old nurse herself was sitting near him with her distaff in her hand, spinning wool.

"Hush, my child," she said, when Ageladas peeped in. "Do not wake him. It is time now for you to eat; and when you have returned from school you will find your sister waiting for you in the garden."

Ageladas, who still obeyed his old nurse even though he had been removed from her care three years before, trotted away and was soon enjoying his midday meal as heartily as his *paidagogos* would let him. He had a bowl of radishes and watercress, with a loaf of bread, a dish of olives, and some small fishes cooked in oil. As he wanted to keep his *paidagogos* in a good temper, in case his plans for the following afternoon should be upset, the boy was careful to use his left hand for

his bread and his right hand for other eatables. Knives and forks he had none, and to sop up the oil and the odd flakes of fish he used little lumps of bread. When the meal was over, the *paidagogos* stumped off again with his charge beside him, and this time they met nobody whom they knew upon the way. At the school Ageladas found his music-master, a dark young man from Ionia, waiting for him. Three or four other boys were already there, each holding his seven-stringed lyre in his right hand, while the fingers of his left hand were ready to pluck the strings.

"To-day," said the teacher, stoking his own lyre so that it gave forth a soft twang, "we will play and sing an ode in the Dorian manner."

His pupils looked pleased. They knew that this meant they would have some sturdy lay of war or victory to sing, for the Dorian manner was used only for such songs.

After he had explained to them both the words and the melody, and had sung the ode himself, they followed him word by word and note by note, and then a whole line at a time, after which he called upon each in turn to sing and play alone. Then they all sang and played together.

Ageladas was one of the youngest boys in the class, and he did not handle his lyre quite as skilfully as some of the others, but he had a clear voice and a good ear, and he was used to singing in the Dorian manner. It was, after all, the easiest.

At the end of the lesson the *paidagogos* took the lyre and tucked it under his cloak, and they went home in the cool spring sunshine.

"I think," remarked Ageladas, as they went, "I think I would rather have learned to play the pipe than the lyre. It has only four holes and the lyre has seven strings."

"That is foolish talk," said the *paidagogos*. "He who plays the pipe must puff out his cheeks, and squint down his nose, and make himself ridiculous. Also he cannot both sing and play together."

"Still, I would rather play the pipe," muttered Ageladas, under his breath.

"A good reason why you should be made to play the lyre instead," growled his companion, who did not believe in letting boys have their own way.

The garden in which Doricha was already waiting for her brother had few flowers to make it beautiful. It was really a

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small paved courtyard, shaded by tamarisks and olive-trees; at one end was a vegetable-plot, where radishes, parsley, onions, and cress were grown, and at the other was a small bed of lilies and irises, silvery white and purple-blue. What the children liked best about the place was the swing hung between two bent and twisted olives, and the see-saw, made of a log and a plank, which a kindly slave had fashioned for them nearby.

Ageladas found Doricha sitting on the swing and swaying gently to and fro. With one hand she held the rope, with the other she clasped her jointed clay doll, Nausicaa, which had a dress made from the same charming fabric as her own—a pale yellow linen sprinkled with stars and birds in deep blue. Over this the little girl wore a cloak of dull brown wool, but the doll—who, of course, did not feel the cool March air—had no cloak.

Doricha was a dark-haired child with big grey eyes and a straight little nose of the shape admired by Greek sculptors. Her hair was gathered into a knot at the back of her head and tied with three narrow bands of blue wool. Her feet, like her brother's, were bare, but in the winter she, like him, would have worn sandals.

When she saw Ageladas coming she jumped up delightedly and came towards him.

"Have you seen the new child yet?" asked her brother.

"Yes. Eurycleia showed him to me. But she will not let me hold him."

"Of course not. You are too small. And you are only a girl."

"Girls are better at holding babies than boys. I *never* drop Nausicaa. Did Eurycleia let *you* hold the new child, brother?"

"I did not want to hold him, thank you. Holding babies is a silly game, anyhow. A *girl's* game."

At this sudden change of mind Doricha opened her eyes wide.

"But," she began, "you said—only just now——"

"Never mind what I said just now. You women always want to argue. My father says so."

Rather crestfallen, poor Doricha hugged the doll Nausicaa tighter for comfort. Already she had been taught that girls must always give way to boys, as women did to men; already

she had been made to understand that her part in life would not be to have fun and do interesting things, but to learn to weave and bake and spin, so that some day she might be a good housewife like her mother.

"Aren't you going to play with me, Ageladas?" she asked. "Eurycleia said you would. And she sent me here to wait for your return from school."

Ageladas, who was really fond of his little sister, said that he was quite willing to play with her—but what could they play? *Apporaxis* and *thanis* were not girl's games, he added regretfully.

"I have brought my knuckle-bones, and my little clay toys," said his sister, "but I hoped you would play see-saw first."

"Very well. Come on."

"Only don't jump too hard, brother; don't jump too high, or I shall be bounced right off the plank."

These Greek children did not sit at either end of the see-saw; they stood upright, on their toes, keeping perfect balance and timing their jumps to a second. Presently, as they bobbed up and down, Ageladas and Doricha began to laugh with glee, and the sound of their gay young voices filled the garden and reached the inner rooms of the house.

Suddenly Eurycleia came hobbling out, with her hand raised in warning.

"Peace, my children," she said. "Your mother has had a headache all day, and now she is sleeping. Play some quiet game, my children, and all will be well."

Even as she spoke, they heard the wailing of the new baby, and the old nurse hastily disappeared into the house.

"She has gone to tell *him* to play some quiet game," remarked Ageladas, as he hopped off the see-saw.

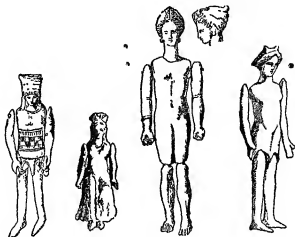
The two children sat down on a ledge of brickwork under the tamarisks, and Doricha arranged her toys on the space between her and her brother. She had knuckle-bones¹ carved in streaked red-and-white marble, and several delightful little clay figures. One was of a little man wearing a peaked cap and riding a swan; another was of a boy in a broad-brimmed hat on a chubby little pony; another was a dove, another a rabbit, and yet another a dog.

¹ In this game the knuckle-bones—five at a time—were tossed into the air, and caught on the back of the hand. If any fell to the ground the player had to try to pick them up without letting those on the hand tumble off.

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"Let's play Greeks and Persians," suggested Ageladas. "The rabbit can be King Xerxes of Persia."

"I'd rather play Greeks and Trojans," said Doricha. "I know you would want to be on the Greek side, because they won in the end, but Hector was a Trojan, and he was as great a hero as any Greek. You told me so yourself. So I don't



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mind being a Trojan. And the man on the swan can be Hector."

"All right. And this fellow with the big hat can be Agamemnon, the leader of the Greeks. Come on, Agamemnon. Get ready to lead your men to victory."

"Come on, Hector," said Doricha, "this clay flower-pot is the city of Troy, and you must defend it with all your might."

Ageladas decided that the Greek army should consist of the dog and the rabbit, which left the poor Trojans with only the dove; but Doricha then brought up her reserves in the shape of the doll, Nausicaa, who, she said, was King Priam of Troy.

"A girl-doll can't be a king," objected Ageladas.

"Then she can be a goddess. She can be the goddess Athene."

"But the goddess Athene was on the side of the Greeks," cried Ageladas, triumphantly.

"Are you sure, brother?"

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"Of course I am sure. I learned all that at school long ago."

On hearing that Athene had been on the side of the Greeks and against the Trojans, Doricha burst into tears.

"I don't want to play any more," she sobbed; "I am never allowed to win."

"Well, then," said Ageladas, "let us play ball. Only don't shriek if you fail to catch it, or Eurycleia will be after us again."

Doricha promised that she would try not to shriek, and for a time she was very good, even when the ball slipped through her fingers. But then, as she darted after one ball that seemed as if it were going to soar over the roof of the house, she could not help uttering a little scream of excitement. A moment later the old nurse came forth and beckoned with her knotted hand.

"Must I come in now, Eurycleia?" panted Doricha, regretfully.

"It is time. Come, my child. And, Ageladas, your *paidagogos* is looking for you."

Doricha trotted obediently after the nurse, and Ageladas, more slowly, made his way to the room where he knew that his *paidagogos* would be waiting to see that he bathed himself and combed his long locks before he went to bed.

The sun was setting over the Gulf of Salamis, and the pillars of the temples on the Acropolis were bathed in daffodil-coloured light. Brown owls, roosting in the roof of the great temple of Athene, began to stir in their sleep, knowing that dusk would soon deepen, and that they would then be able to come forth and hunt for mice.

Doricha was fast asleep on her little couch in the women's quarters, the doll Nausicaa clutched tightly in her arms. Ageladas was lying half-awake, thinking what fun he would have with his friend Diomedes the next day. The new child lay in its basket, swaddled in bands of soft wool, and the old nurse was rocking it gently, at the same time crooning a lullaby:

All the wild things on the hill
Now are fast asleep;
All the murmuring bees are still,
And the fishes of the deep.

Outside the cool breeze was gently moving the garland over the door.

"THE GREENS WILL WIN!"

A.D. 45

THE steady patter of autumn rain on the roof of his room roused from his sleep a Roman boy who had been dreaming that he was quite a long way from Rome, wandering among the Alban hills near the country house where his father took the whole family every summer. All the children—there were four of them—looked forward eagerly to that holiday, the only son of the family, Quintus Sulpicius Maximus, most of all, for it meant a brief escape from lessons—and he was rather a lazy child.

The narrow room where he slept was dimly lit by a boat-shaped bronze lamp, but now a faint gleam of grey through the grated window showed that dawn was breaking. A few minutes later the door opened with a loud creak and a man peered in—an old man with a dark, withered face ending in a thin wisp of white beard.

"Up," said the newcomer. "It is time. Up—or you will be late for school."

He spoke Latin with a slight foreign accent, for he was a Greek from the island of Rhodes. He was *custos* to Quintus; it was his duty to see that the boy was dutiful and to take him to and from school—just as in Athens the watchful *paidagogos* had escorted Ageladas more than four hundred years before.

"Up," commanded the *custos*, again. "It is raining. You will need your strong boots."

"I come," answered Quintus, speaking in Greek and hoping that the sound of that language would put the man in a better temper. He knew that the *custos* hated wet weather and was always grumpy unless the sun shone.

"Come swiftly. I go to put oil in the lantern. Look to it that your writing-tablets are in your school-bag—and leave your nuts and your marbles and your peg-top at home."

Quintus grinned ruefully at the reminder as the *custos* shuffled away. Only the day before he had got into trouble

for forgetting to put his school-gear on the top of the various playthings he had slyly stuffed into the bottom of the bag. The nuts were playthings, too, not meant to be eaten. Roman boys played many games with nuts, and even Roman emperors sometimes did the same.

"A wet morning," thought Quintus, as he crept slowly out of his bronze-framed bed, "and a cross *custos*. I wish we were back in the country!"

With chilly fingers he fastened the bronze clasp of the leather girdle which held his linen tunic in place and buckled the thongs of his boots. The soles of the boots were studded with nails, and Quintus had been very anxious that the nails should be arranged to form words, such as 'Walk!' or 'Follow!' Several of the bigger boys at his school had such things and thought it was great fun to stamp about leaving these prints upon the dusty or the muddy ground; but the father of Quintus did not see the joke, and the nails on his son's boots were quite uninteresting.

"It is all very well for the *custos*," thought the boy, as he flung his purple-hemmed cloak over his shoulder. "The other Greek slaves in the kitchen will give him some hot bread before we go, while I must wait till we reach the baker's shop. I do wish we were back in the country!"

He found the old man waiting for him in the *atrium*, or main hall, of the house, and he could see his jaws moving up and down in a way which showed that he, at least, was not going out hungry into the bleak world.

The outside roof of the *atrium* slanted inward and downward to the oblong opening through which, on such wet days as this, the rain fell into a marble basin. At one end stood the little altar of the Lar, one of the two household gods who were believed to watch over the family as long as they were not neglected. He had another altar in a small niche at the farther end of the *atrium*, but this he shared with his twin-god. It was the holy shrine of the Lares and Penates, which all Roman children were taught to honour. From his earliest babyhood Quintus could remember seeing the images of the little friendly gods polished with wax and crowned with myrtle and rosemary. After every meal a goblet of wine was poured out before them, and sometimes tiny cakes were offered to them, and a fire would be kindled, upon which salt was sprinkled so that the flames crackled and turned blue.

Every Roman was a high priest in his own home and offered solemn sacrifice to his household gods. Quintus, as the son of the house, had been trained to take part in these solemn rites as soon as he was old enough to understand how solemn they were.

As he joined his *custos* he glanced towards the altar of the Lares and Penates. The *atrium* was chilly enough; the morning light was not yet so clear that it showed the cheerful patterns traced in tiny squares of red-and-black-and-white marble on the floor, and the rain splashed drearily down from the roof into the basin beneath; but the household gods were under cover, and in their own place—which was at home. Quintus envied them.

In spite of the early hour, the streets were neither silent nor deserted. Many shops were already open. People were on their way to work and boys on their way to school. Long trains of mules and donkeys, heavily laden with fruit and vegetables, were coming into the city, and with them came slaves with baskets on their heads, bringing the leeks and onions and cresses that the Romans loved.

Nearly every wayfarer carried a bronze lantern, for though Rome was well provided with baths and drains, nobody had yet thought of lighting the streets, which were dangerous during the hours of darkness.

"I hope," remarked Quintus, pulling his purple-hemmed cloak up over his head, "I hope that the baker will have a hot loaf ready for me."

"You think too much about things to eat," growled the *custos*, hastily brushing a tell-tale crumb from his beard. "And if you are not thinking about things to eat, it is the chariot-race, or the circus. Will the Greens win? And if the Greens lose, all you boys look as sorrowful as if all your fathers had been slain in battle the same day."

"The Greens don't often lose," said Quintus, who was a stout supporter of the popular team of charioteers.

"Their turn will come. And then the Blues or the Reds will be all the rage. The folly of men! Is there nothing in the world more important than that one particular colour should win a chariot-race?"

Quintus thought that there probably was nothing more important, but he kept this thought to himself. They were drawing near the street where the bakers' shops were sending

forth a delicious smell of freshly made bread, and he did not want the *custos* to tell him that if they lingered there he might be late for school.

Several early customers were already standing under the projecting roof of the first shop, which was really a sort of brick-walled shed, opening straight on to the street. In the background could be dimly seen the beehive-shaped ovens where the bread was baked, and the large wooden kneading-trough where two young men, stripped to the waist, were pounding great lumps of pale brown dough with their floury fists, lifting them up, dropping them, squeezing them, rolling them into balls. Just as Quintus and his companion halted, the master-baker came forward with a tray of bun-shaped loaves, crisp and warm, and dumped it with a bang on the broad wooden ledge which served as a counter.

"Give me two of those," said the *custos*, producing a handful of small bronze coins from the goatskin wallet which hung at his girdle.

"Take which you please," responded the baker, as he flung the money into a deep bowl of glossy red earthenware. "All are good. Cæsar eats none better."

"Claudius Cæsar cares little what he eats, if report speaks truly," remarked another customer. "Not like the last emperor, Caligula. He was something like an emperor, he was. Why, even his horse fed only on the finest wheaten bread and barley-cakes."

"Ah," said another. "So I have heard tell. And I'll wager the horse longed sometimes for some plain bran, or a mouthful of common hay."

"Plain bran!" echoed a small, withered man, very poorly clad. "Ah, there were many of us poor folk who would have been glad of a peck of plain bran while Cæsar's horse was nibbling barley-cakes."

"Who speaks of Cæsar?" asked a deep voice, and there was a clinking of bronze as a tall soldier joined the little group.

"I am saying no ill of Cæsar," cried the poorly clad man. "I am not even speaking of the Cæsar we have now—Claudius Cæsar."

"You leave Cæsar alone, alive or dead," said the soldier, holding out his hand for a loaf. "I am Cæsar's man, paid by him to put down his foes whether they be in far countries or

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in Rome itself. I was in the Tenth Legion, and I am now in the Imperial Guard."

"I am no foe to Claudius Caesar," muttered the other. "He does not waste the tax-money on his pleasures, and he loves the library better than the circus or the battlefield."

"You forget his victorious campaign in Britain two years since," said the soldier, "when he brought home many British captives and offered to the gods of Rome a rich corslet set with British pearls."

"Even a quiet dog will bark sometimes," retorted the little, shabby man.

At this the soldier looked so fierce that the master-baker hastened to stop a conversation that might at any moment end in an open quarrel.

"Here," said the master-baker, "what's all this? I cannot have disputes among my customers—and *you*," he added, with a scornful glance at the little man, "*you* have never been one of them that I know."

"I meant no harm, master. I came to ask if I might for a penny or two buy some stale wheaten loaves, or maybe some broken pieces."

"That's a pretty idea—wheaten loaves—even stale—are not for the likes of you."

"I have eaten such bread in my time, though black bread and lentils are all I taste in these days. But it is not for myself. It is for my wife. She has lain sick this many a day and cannot touch our coarse food. She pines for the fine bread she used to have in her young days, when she was a slave in the house of a noble Roman lady. They gave her her freedom when she married me—and my master gave me mine—but we are worse off than we were before."

"Give this man two of those fresh loaves," said a quiet voice from the outskirts of the little crowd.

"Very fine—and who will pay for them if I do?" asked the baker.

"I will. There is the money."

Everyone turned to look at the speaker, an elderly man simply but not poorly dressed, whose hooked nose and long black hair showed that he came from one of the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire.

"A Jew," whispered the soldier. "I saw dozens of them when I was serving in Jerusalem with the Tenth Legion."

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"Not a Jew now, good soldier," said the stranger, as he turned away. "A Christian."

"What's that?" inquired the man who had admired Caligula for his extravagant tastes. "What is he talking about?"

"Some sort of new religion. It started in Jeusalem not long before I went there. The Empire is chock full of new religions nowadays," said the soldier, scornfully.

Meanwhile the ragged man had hurried off, clutching the two loaves tightly in his hands, and Quintus, staring all the time at the soldier, had finished his breakfast. The soldier, like all the members of the Imperial bodyguard, was very fine to look upon, with his surcoat sewn with strips of bronze, his two-edged bronze sword, and his iron helmet surmounted by a dangling plume of black horse-hair. Across his sunburnt cheek was a silvery white mark, the scar of a wound which he had received when fighting with the Tenth Legion in a far country. Quintus wished he could have asked him how he came by that scar, for, boylike, he loved tales of war and battle; but he knew that the *custos* would not encourage such a conversation.

"Come," said the *custos*, firmly. "We have loitered long enough. The rain has stopped. It is so light now that we do not need the lantern any more. Here—hold your school-bag while I quench the flame."

The school which Quintus attended was held in the upper room of the teacher's house, not in a special building. In niches round the painted stucco walls were busts of Homer, Plato, Euripides, and other famous Greek writers. The boys sat in rows on wooden benches, with their writing-tablets propped on their bare knees, and their teacher sat on a throne-like high chair with a sort of desk before him and an alarming birch-rod dangling from a peg conveniently near his hand. Though the sun had risen, the small grated windows, high up in the wall, gave only a dim light, and the room was lit by bronze lamps swinging on chains from tall lamp-stands. On the master's desk stood a bronze candlestick with a flickering candle. Quintus never forgot the excitement when, one winter morning, the old wooden candlestick which had formerly stood there went up in flames and narrowly missed setting the schoolmaster's hair on fire.

With a good deal of shuffling and clattering, the boys settled

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themselves for the next hour's work. Quintus opened his tablets—they were two in number, strung together by cords so that they could be shut up like a book, with the waxed surfaces opposite each other. Hastily he smoothed out with the flat end of his *stylus* the sum he had done, not very well, the day before, a sum which had cost him as many strokes from the birch rod as it contained mistakes—that is to say, three.

"Silence," proclaimed the master, in a deep voice. "We will begin with a passage from the *Georgics* of the immortal poet, Virgil, that passage which describes how the honey-bees build their hive. Listen carefully——"

The 'book' from which he read aloud was not in the least like the books of later times. It consisted of a very long strip of sheepskin (parchment), wound round a wooden roller which he held in his right hand. As he went on reading, he unrolled a little more and a little more, and presently with his left hand, which held a second roller, he started winding up the parchment he had just unwound. That was how the Greeks and Romans enjoyed the works of their great writers—struggling with two rolls of parchment of which one grew fat as the other grew thin.

Meanwhile the three little sisters of Quintus had been bathed and dressed, their hair combed by their special Greek slave-woman, tiny gold ear-rings pinched into their ears, and slender bracelets of jet and amber clasped round their arms. Simplicia, the eldest, was nine; Marcella, next in age to her, was seven, and Fannia, the baby, was only three. By the time that their brother was in the middle of his lessons they had had their breakfast of bread, raisins, and watercress, and while Fannia played contentedly on the mosaic floor, her two elder sisters sat on either side of their mother, doing what they called their lessons.

Their mother, though she was still quite young, had that grave and sedate dignity which a certain kind of Roman loved to see in all his womenfolk. Her hair was not dyed red in imitation of the hair of the captive women whom Claudius Cæsar had brought back from his campaign in the far-off, misty island of Britain; there were no tinkling golden tassels on her sandals; and her flowing, short-sleeved robe, clasped on each shoulder with a bronze brooch, was of plain creamy white woollen stuff, not apple-green or flame-pink. Simplicia, who was rather a vain little girl, secretly admired the red locks,

tasselled sandals, and gaily coloured garments sported by some of her mother's friends; but already she realized that her *paterfamilias*, the 'father of the family' who was such a powerful person in a Roman household, would never allow his wife or his daughters to imitate that example.



ROMAN MAFRON

Simplicia frowned anxiously at the tray of polished walnut-wood which rested upon her mother's knee. On this tray were the twenty-four letters of the Roman alphabet, neatly cut out of ivory, and ten polished pebbles; it was a spelling- and counting-lesson which her mother was giving her that morning.

"Now, Simplicia," said that lady, "you have been a very good girl to-day, so you may choose what word you would like to spell next."

The little girl thought hard for a moment. Then a smile crinkled up her face.

"I should like, O my mother, to spell the word *anser*." (This is the Latin for 'goose'.)

"Do so, then, if you can."

Simplicia's hand hovered over the ivory letters and clutched at two of them, 'a' and 'n'. These she put next each other at the side of the tray. Then

she added an 's', after which she seemed doubtful what letter to take.

"Come, my daughter, come—*anser* is not a hard word to spell."

"No, my mother—not if you are quite sure whether to put an 'e' or a 'u' after the 's'."

"Are you not 'quite sure'?"

Simplicia shook her head.

"I *think* I know," she said.

"Well then, show me what it is you think you know."

Simplicia planted a rather hesitating finger on the letter 'u' and then hastily withdrew her hand, seeing by her mother's face that she had made an unlucky choice.

"Fie, child," said her mother. "'U' and 'e' are not the

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same even when spoken, much less when they are written. I hope I shall never hear you speak this word as if the last letter but one were a 'u.'"

"Ah," cried Simplicia, "*now* I know!"

And she pushed an 'e' and an 'r' into their right places after the 'ans', so that *anser* appeared quite correctly in letters of ivory.

"There is also something which *I* think I know," remarked her mother, with an encouraging nod. "And that is what made you wish to spell this word. Was it not the history lesson which I gave you yesterday?"

"Oh, yes, my mother, it was—the lesson about how some savage people called Gauls attacked the city of Rome four hundred years ago—and how the geese woke up, and cackled, and gave the alarm one night when the Gauls were going to seize the city while the sentinels slept."

"Not the city," interrupted Marcella, who was better at history than her elder sister. "They had already taken the city. It was the fortress of the Capitol which they were trying to capture by night."

"Very true," said her mother, "though you should have waited until I asked you a question, my child."

"Marcella never waits, if she thinks she knows the answer," murmured Simplicia.

"Be silent, Simplicia. And you, Marcella, see if you can spell the name of the leader of the Gauls. Do you remember what his name was?"

"I do, my mother—but I am not sure if I can spell it."

"Try."

Marcella tried—and succeeded. Very neatly she arranged the ivory letters so that they formed the name of the Gaulish chieftain—Brennus.

"And now, children, which of you can spell the name of the Roman leader who defeated the Gauls? It was Camillus."

"I can, *I* can spell it!" cried Simplicia, before Marcella had time to speak, but pride went before a fall, for she gave him only one 'l' instead of two.

The next lesson was counting, with the aid of the polished pebbles, and after that came a writing-lesson, with wax-coated tablets just like those which Quintus used in school.

All this time the baby of the family had been playing with her toys, among which were some delightful little animals,

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goats, dogs, horses and ducks, modelled in bronze. One bronze duck was a special pet with her, nobody could guess why. It was exactly like two others in the same quaintly mixed family of creatures, but it was the only one Fannia really loved. She called it Claudia, after the emperor, having heard her father say that Claudius was fond of pet animals, and at every meal she would poke crumbs against its small bronze beak.

"Good little Claudia," she was murmuring, as her sisters opened their writing-tablets. "Cæsar loves you, and I love you, Claudia, and you shall have a beautiful tart presently."

About ten minutes later she looked up from her toys and saw that Simplicia and Marcella were busy writing, each with her sharp-pointed metal *stylus* in her hand. Fannia at once scrambled to her feet and toddled eagerly to her mother, still clasping Claudia.

"Fannia wants to write too," she cried. "Fannia can write if mother helps her!"

Her mother laughed as she lifted her on to her lap and rested the wooden tray on the arm of her bronze chair.

"Let me have your writing-tablets, Simplicia," she said, and, when the little girl had handed them over, she smoothed the wax with the flat end of the *stylus* so that Camillus and the goose were both wiped out.

"What do you want to write, my child?"

"Claudia—I want to write Claudia. She would like Fannia to write her name—wouldn't you, Claudia?"

The child held Claudia firmly in her left hand while her mother folded the chubby fingers of her right hand round the *stylus* and guided it over the wax. It was an exciting moment. Though Fannia had no idea how to spell the name of her beloved duck, she half thought that she was writing it all by herself, and she nearly poked a hole in the wax with Claudia's beak as she called upon her to admire what she had done.

A slave-girl then entered with a red pottery dish of tartlets and cakes. These were supposed to be rewards for children who had made no mistakes in their lessons that morning, but Simplicia and Marcella knew very well that even if they made many they would have their daily treat just the same, and Fannia always had her share. Just lately, since her mother had begun to guide her hand over the wax tablets, the child had claimed her cake because "Fannia has done her lessons well,

too"; but this morning she claimed it because Fannia and Claudia had *both* done their lessons well.

Meanwhile Quintus was struggling with the last of his lessons for that morning—a lesson in Greek grammar. Every educated Roman was expected to be able to write and read Greek, and even to speak it on occasion, and it was in order that their children should hear the language spoken from their babyhood that so many Roman fathers had Greek men and women among their slaves.

Quintus found the Greek verbs very difficult, and when the time came for his *custos* to conduct him home to the midday meal the boy was still murmuring various parts of the two verbs he had had to learn that morning—the verb 'to go' and the verb 'to say'. As they passed by a blank wall cased in fresh pink plaster they happened to meet another slave from the island of Rhodes, and the two Greeks naturally stopped for a short chat. While their beards were wagging busily Quintus took out his *stylus* and started scratching on the wall. "I go," he wrote, "I go—I went—I have gone." This was much better fun than writing on a wax tablet. "I say," he wrote, "I said—I have said—he says." All this he wrote in Greek, remembering his lesson. But when he wanted to write a whole sentence he broke off into Latin, so that it was half in one language and half in the other that he scribbled: "I go home to dinner."

The *custos* and his fellow-countryman had now finished their chat—or, if they had not said all they wanted to say, they felt that it was time to say no more. Quintus slipped his *stylus* back into his school-bag, but not before the *custos* had spotted what he had been doing.

"Hi!" said that grim person. "Give me your bag—that is what comes of letting you carry it yourself. You must needs be blunting your *stylus* by scraping walls with it."

"It is not a hard wall," protested Quintus. "The plaster is new. And someone else has already been scratching words on it. Look——"

And he pointed triumphantly to the place where, traced in large, unsteady letters, was the slogan, *The Greens will win!* "Always those foolish charioteers," grumbled the *custos*, dragging his charge away by the elbow. "Now, if it were gladiators——"

Quintus knew that the old man was keenly interested in

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these fierce fellows who fought in the arena before excited crowds of Romans, old and young. He himself had not been to many gladiatorial combats, but he had at home several bronze toys in the shape of gladiators, each armed with one of the weapons used in such combats, sword, sickle, trident, and net.

"My father is going to take me to-morrow to the first day of the games," remarked the boy.

"Ay, ay, I know—the games held in remembrance of Sulla's victory over the Samnians and the Lucanians more than a hundred years ago. Those were evil days, when each man's hand was against his brother, and you could not tell friend from foe. They say Sulla did well first of all, when he put an end to that strife and confusion, but afterwards he became a tyrant and made harsh and cruel laws."

"Those things we have learned in school," said Quintus, impatiently. "And I do not care how ill Sulla behaved. He began these games which are still held every year. People who begin games are the people I like. I only wish there were more such, and then there would hardly be any schooldays from January to December."

"Well, even now," growled the *custos*, "there are almost as many holidays as working-days for everyone except us slaves. The children play—the boys go to the games—the artisans lay aside their tools and crowd to the circus—on nearly eighty days in every year. But who ever thinks of giving *us* a little mirth and ease?"

"Never mind," said Quintus, "on the days that I do not go to school, you do not have to go out early in the morning and take me there!"

"Oh," muttered the *custos*, "so you think that I have to get up before dawn only on those days when you go to school—I wish it were so. My bones get no younger."

Quintus was quite a good-natured boy, but he had never been taught to feel pity for slaves and poor folk, and he had heard that remark about the bones of his *custos* before.

"Nobody's bones get younger," he argued, "not even Fannia's."

The *custos* did not answer. They were now nearing home, and in the distance he could see the tall form of his master, the father of Quintus, emerging from a side street.

When he saw his father, the boy broke into a run. They

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were excellent friends, in spite of the awe with which Quintus had been carefully trained to regard all his elders.

"Well, my son," said this worthy Roman. "How have you fared at school to-day?"

"I was not beaten once, father."

"That is good. I have just come from the Senate, and on my way home I went to the street of the shoemakers to get me some strong shoes against the winter weather."

"O my father, did you go to the shoemaker who has a crow that can talk?"

"I did. And a marvellous bird it is."

"Has it learned some new words since you took me there with you?"

"Let me think—what did it say then?"

"It said 'Great is Cæsar'—and it said 'Here be the best shoes in Rome'."

"Both those things it said to-day. And also 'The Greens will win!'"

Quintus glanced at the *custos*, but the eyes of the old slave were respectfully fixed upon the ground.

"O my father!" said the boy. "Do take me soon to the street of the shoemakers! I love their shops, all painted in gay colours, and the pet birds hanging in wickerwork cages outside."

"Very good. But do not forget, my son, that in order to reach the street of the shoemakers we must pass through the street of the booksellers, and that I may pause there and buy you a new book, Homer or Virgil or Xenophon, instead of going to visit the talking crow."

This idea did not seem to Quintus very attractive, but he said nothing more, and with his father's hand upon his shoulder he entered the *atrium* of his home.

The rain had long ceased. A patch of blue sky was mirrored in the oblong basin, and five fat pigeons sat in a row on the edge of the sloping roof, murmuring placidly together. In a pleasant room to the rear of the house, opening from a square, columned courtyard, the lady of the house and her two elder daughters were waiting. Fannia had been carried off by her Greek nurse, as she was not yet old enough to eat her midday meal with her parents.

The meal consisted of cold meat left over from supper the night before, bread, salad, and red wine. This was one of the

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families where the old Roman ideas were still remembered. The food was plain; the garments of the family were simple; the lady-mother wove and spun the linen and the woollen stuff of which those garments were made. Many of the senators who admired those old ideas—and could not persuade their own wives to follow them—were wont to hold up the mother of Quintus as an example of what a Roman matron ought to be.

Like all Roman fathers, this particular senator made a habit of discussing with his young son such events of the day, political, national, and imperial, as he thought that the boy could understand. In this manner the youthful Romans were trained to take their place in later life among the men who guided the destiny and conducted the business of the great Roman Empire. Usually Quintus enjoyed this part of his education. He liked especially to hear about the distant dominions of Rome in Europe, Asia, and Africa, and what the legions were doing there; about the long roads which were being built to link up the chief cities with one another and with Rome itself, and the bridges being flung across mighty rivers with odd-sounding, un-Roman names. But on this day his thoughts wandered a little, and his father noticed that he was not listening to him with his usual bright-eyed attentiveness.

"My son," said the senator, "of what are you thinking that interests you more than the speeches made in the Senate to-day?"

"I am sorry, my father. I was thinking about——"

"Go on. Speak frankly."

"I was thinking about the chariot-races, and hoping the Greens would win. Do you think the Greens *will* win, my father?"

The senator smiled.

"I am afraid, my son, that more than one grave senator was asking himself the same question to-day—and more than one merchant in the Forum. And to-morrow, when the sun sets, we shall all be as wise as to-night at sunset we shall be ignorant."

"Your sisters," said the mother, "are very anxious to be allowed to play with your ivory chariot, Quintus. They have begged me to ask you if they may."

"Do say 'yes,' brother," pleaded Simplicia. "We will take great care of the little chariot and all the beautiful little horses!"

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"Girls don't understand horses," said Quintus. "You will drive them too fast—and you won't know how much corn to give them after the race."

"How much corn do you give them?" asked Marcella.

Without meaning to do it she had put her brother in an awkward fix, for he himself, though he always pretended to give his ivory team a good feed every day, did not know exactly what to answer. Then he remembered the conversation he had heard the same morning at the baker's stall.

"I give them each twice as much as the Emperor Caligula gave to his favourite horse," he declared, grandly.

Marcella was going to ask another question, but Simplicia checked her with a touch on her arm, fearing that if Quintus were to be pressed too hard he might end by forbidding them to touch his beloved toy.

"May we please have the chariot just for a little while?" begged Simplicia.

"Let your sisters have it, my son," said their father. "This afternoon you are coming with me to the baths, so you will not need your chariot—and it might be well for the team to have a little gentle exercise."



PATERFAMILIAS

Quintus nodded his consent, feeling important—and delighted that he was to go to the baths that day.

The Romans were a bath-loving people. Most of the well-to-do families had bathrooms in their own houses, but in all the principal cities of the empire there were fine public baths, with cold showers, plunges, and swimming-tanks, hot baths, and rooms where the bathers could be rubbed with oil, or massaged, or could do exercises with weighted leather mittens rather like dumb-bells. Others played ball, counting their throws and catches at the tops of their voices.

Through the narrow, noisy streets Quintus trotted at his father's side. Round his neck hung the amulet or talisman of gilded bronze which had been placed there when as a baby he had been dedicated to the kindly goddess Nundina, and round his small shoulders was draped the purple-edged toga which showed that he was a free-born citizen of Rome. His father's

toga had no purple hem, not because he was not such a citizen, but because no grown-up person could wear a toga hemmed with that colour unless he were a priest or a magistrate chosen to offer sacrifices to the gods on behalf of the state.

Owing to the narrowness of the streets no wheeled traffic was allowed during the daytime, but there were enough people on foot, or being carried in litters, to make the city a lively, jostling, bustling scene.

When they reached the entrance to the baths, Quintus, being still a child, was allowed to enter free of charge, but for himself his father had to pay a copper coin. They went first to the gymnasium, where they did some exercises with the weighted leather mittens. Quintus was always proud to see how vigorously his father swung his arms, and now, when many of the other grown-up bathers were panting for breath, he remained active and cool. And when they played ball nobody threw higher or caught oftener than he. After this they passed into a room heated with warm air by means of brick pipes and then into a hot bath. The next stage was either a cold bath or a plunge in the swimming-pool. Quintus wanted to swim, but his father decided against it. Then attendants came and rubbed them down, and anointed their bodies with oil, which was supposed to prevent their catching cold on the way home.

"May I have something to eat now?" asked the boy, as he slipped his tunic over his shoulders.

"You can have a sausage or a cake, whichever you prefer," answered his father, beckoning to a young man who was going round among the bathers with a basket of cakes, sweetmeats, and sausages on his head. While he nibbled his sausage, Quintus listened to the conversation between an elderly senator and a young dandy, who were draping their togas round them. The senator wanted to talk about events in Gaul and Britain, but the dandy would speak of nothing but chariot-races, and the yearly games which were to begin the next day. Quintus longed to ask this earnest sportsman what he thought of the chances of the Greens.

When he and his father reached home, the first thought of the small boy was whether his beloved ivory chariot was any the worse for having been lent to his sisters for the afternoon. Happily it was not, and the little girls were delighted at having

had it in their care so long. By the time that the patch of sky over the *atrium* had turned from sunset gold to twilight grey, Quintus was not sorry to stretch himself out on his narrow bronze couch. His last thought was of the Green chariot-team and their chances of victory. He knew that 'Victory' was the name of one of the swift horses that carried the Green colours, and he hoped that the name would bring luck to them all. As he watched his *custos* trimming the small clay lamp that burned in his room all night, he wished that he could have asked him if he did not think that a horse with such a name was practically bound to win. But he knew that it was impossible to arouse any feeling of interest in chariot-racing in the mind of that grey-bearded Greek, and with a last glance at the ivory model, now standing on the stool by his bed, he turned his back to it and to the lamp and settled himself to sleep.

VI

THE YOUNG SEA-KINGS

A.D. 870

IN the clear brightness of a northern dawn the small birds were singing merrily. As the sun climbed higher and the shadows of the mountains moved away, the many-coloured wild flowers in the meadows below began to peer from their silver blanket of dew. The broad and deep waters of the fjord were changing from purple to blue, and the golden dragon gleamed on the prow of a long boat which lay high and dry on the shelving shore.

The house of the owner of the boat stood not far away—a one-storeyed house built of pine-planks and flanked by a barn, a cow-house, a shed, and a pigsty. It was so early that no one was yet astir, but the beasts were beginning to move restlessly, thinking of their breakfast and hoping that they would get it soon.

Inside the house—which consisted of only one large, long room—a sound of snoring drowned the song of the birds outside. Its master, Sigurd Agvald, lay flat on his back on a four-post bed of carved and painted pinewood, and from his nose came a deep, steady drone. At his side lay his wife, sleeping peacefully, her plaits of yellow hair drooping over the side of the bed and touching the bearskin mat on the earthen floor. The coverlet was of thick woollen stuff, dyed crimson with the juices of certain mountain mosses.

On the rough, wooden wall at the bed-head hung Sigurd Agvald's helmet, shield, and sword, well wrought of burnished bronze. The shield was ornamented with circles of blue-and-green enamel, and the hilt of the sword was studded with small, deep red stones—they looked like tiny rubies, but were really garnets. Nearby was a shelf where he kept some of his household treasures: his drinking-horns carved out of walrus ivory, his silver bracelets, his wife's buckles and brooches of gold and bronze, and, most precious of all, the slender goblet of dark blue glass which he had brought back

from a strange land far over the sea—a land once called Phœnicia and later, Palestine.

On the floor at the foot of the bed two small boys were sleeping upon pallets of woollen stuff, with coverlets of grey wolfskin over them. One of them, Erik, was Sigurd Agvald's son; the other, Leif, was the son of an even wealthier and more powerful Viking. Among those stout seafarers of the ninth century after Christ it was the custom for a man to send his son to be brought up and educated in the house of some friend or kinsman of slightly lower rank than himself. Erik, who got on very well with Leif, thought this a good plan. He had no brothers, and it was fun to have a playmate. Also he was glad that his own father did not think it necessary to hand him over to anyone else. It is true that Sigurd Agvald often spoke of doing this, particularly when his small son had been up to mischief, but he always said he was going to look for some suitable person, and he never seemed to look very hard; and in the meantime Erik and Leif played with their toys and learned their simple lessons and rode their ponies and sailed their boats and dreamed of the time when they, too, would go forth in quest of gain and glory, as the sons of the sea-kings were wont to go.

At the farther end of the house, near the door, three or four thralls—the bond-slaves of Sigurd Agvald—lay huddled among the straw, with two shaggy hounds curled up at their feet. The hounds snored softly and the thralls snored heavily, and these sounds, blending with the more proud and trumpet-like snore of the sea-king himself, were quite enough to drown the song of the birds in the bright morning air outside.

None the less, Leif opened his eyes and cocked his ears to listen. Very faintly he could hear the lowing of the cows and the grunting of the pigs. Surely it was time to get up! He poked Erik in the ribs, but gently, so that he should not wake with a cry.

"What is it?" asked the other boy, turning over drowsily.

"Get up, slowbones—look at the sun shining through the shutters! Let us go and have a gallop on our ponies while the thralls get breakfast and feed the animals."

"Good—I will come. And we will take the dogs, too."

Treading softly, the two boys crept out of the house, pausing only to give the thralls a cautious shake and whisper

to them that they had better be up and doing or Sigurd Agvald would be angry. The two hounds jumped up, wagging their tails, all agog for a run, and when once they were out in the sunshine they frisked round Leif and Erik with joyful barks.

The two ponies which the boys went to fetch from the fenced-in field were almost exactly the same age as themselves, each having been a new-born foal when it was given to its baby master on his own birthday. Leif's was a chestnut, and was called Haki, after a famous king among the Norsemen; Erik's was a roan, and as it was rather a fat, lazy pony he called it Huggleik, after a king of whom it was told that he liked better to sit at home and listen to his fiddlers than to go forth and fight battles, or sail over the sea.

When they heard the voices of their young masters, Haki and Huggleik came cantering across the grass, whinnying a gay 'good morning.' After they had had their noses stroked and their necks patted, they willingly allowed the boys to vault on to their backs and gallop them round and round the field. Every Norseman learned to ride without the aid of either saddle or bridle, but Sigurd Agvald's horse, a large, sturdy grey, sometimes bore rich trappings of bronze, with stirrups inlaid with walrus ivory and reins of scarlet leather. The grey was grazing tranquilly while the ponies dashed to and fro. Being an older and more majestic animal, it was quite well pleased to leave such frolics to the youngsters.

Presently the sound of a horn, blown by one of the thralls at the door of the house, warned Erik and Leif that breakfast was ready, and a delicious smell of grilled salt pork greeted them as they stepped inside. Sigurd Agvald had now combed his long and thick hair and his drooping moustache; his bracelets were clasped round his arms, and his girdle was fastened round his tunic of red woollen stuff. On his feet were shoes of reindeer-skin, from which leather thongs were bound criss-cross round his legs as far as the knee, over his brown woollen trousers. His wife, Gyda, had also combed and re-braided her hair and clasped her long mantle with her second-best bronze brooch.

"Now Odin bless thee, my children," said Gyda, laying her hands on the heads of the two boys. "Remember that to-day Elskil the skald is coming to teach you your runes."

Neither Erik nor Leif seemed very glad of this reminder. Every Norseman of any worth was anxious that his sons

should learn to read, if not to write, the curious-looking characters, called 'runes,' which formed the Norse alphabet. This art was taught only by the 'skalds,' or 'bards,' whose duty it was to remember and recite the legends of Odin and the other gods of the sea-kings, and the great deeds of the sea-kings themselves. In winter Erik and Leif liked their lessons well enough, though often they would rather have been racing on their snow-shoes, playing ball-games on the ice, or having a fierce tug-of-war with strips of walrus-hide instead of ropes. But during the brief summer, when the whole world seemed to be made for the children to be happy in all day, it was often a sad trial to have to sit still and listen to the husky old voice of Elskil and repeat after him endless tales about Odin and Thor.

Breakfast was a hearty meal in the house of Sigurd Agvald. There was grilled salt pork, barley-bread, and honey. To drink there was mead—that wine, made from honey, which the sea-kings loved so well. During the meal Sigurd discussed his plans for the next raid overseas. An injury to his shoulder, received in an attack upon an Irish monastery the year before, had kept him for many months at home, but now he was—or declared he was—quite fit to face any hardship and any peril, on sea or on land.

"I wish," said Gyda, a little anxiously, "that you were going again to Ireland. Monks are mild men. They do not resist. But those Anglo-Saxons and Franks fight hard."

"They fear us Norsemen, none the less," returned her husband. "Did I not tell you that I had heard how they pray every day to their God to deliver them from our fury?"

"Things would go ill with us in this land without the spoils which our dragon-ships bring from beyond the sea. I know that, Sigurd Agvald. But I am sorry for the women and the children, and the old, feeble folk, when our men make a landing in their country."

"We have no quarrel with them, wife. Let them run away, and we will not hurt them. Or let them hand over what we need, without any foolish fighting, and for my part I am willing to let them live. But we sea-kings must have gold and gear, for there is a lack of such things in these homelands of ours."

"There is indeed," agreed his wife. "And I shall be glad when you return safely, and the cold-nosed one drops upon

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

the shore yonder, and the *Raven of the Wind* brings us a rich buiden along the Path of the Sea-Birds."

Both Erik and Leif knew the meaning of all these odd-sounding terms. The "cold-nosed one" was the anchor, the *Raven of the Wind* was the name of Sigurd Agvald's ship; and the "Path of the Sea-Birds" was the sea. All the Norse

people loved to use such language, and their national poetry was full of it.

"There is much talk now of taking women and children from this country and making settlements in the rich homelands of the Anglo-Saxons and the Franks," Gyda continued. "The winter is not so long nor so bitter there, and there is corn and meat enough to feed many. What is your mind upon that matter, Sigurd Agvald?"

Her husband looked keenly at her under his fair, bushy eyebrows. "When a woman asks a man his mind, she has most often made up her own," said he. "And more than once it has

seemed to me that you wished to know whether I was thinking of leaving our home here for ever and seeking a new one in another country."

"I have good reason for wishing to know, Sigurd Agvald. If we must depart, there are many things I must do first. A whole winter's spinning and weaving would hardly give us mantles and blankets enough to stock a new home."

"Foolish words," said the sea-king, gruffly. "We cannot load the *Raven of the Wind* with mantles and blankets. Barrels of mead and salt pork and many weapons—those we must take. After we have chosen a place to settle and fenced it all round and filled our sheep-folds with sheep, then it will be time for spinning and weaving."



VIKING SHIP

THE YOUNG SEA-KINGS

"So we *are* going," murmured Gyda, "I thought as much." And she looked very sad, for she loved her house by the fjord, and the idea of leaving it and sailing over the sea to an unknown land seemed terrible to her.

"Nothing is certain yet," said Sigurd Agvald. "Not even the day of departing or the course we shall steer. I shall go first, with a band of warriors. After we have seized land and flocks and driven the people away, I will come back and fetch you and Erik."

"And Leif, father," interrupted Erik, anxiously. "Leif will come with us?"

Both boys raised eager eyes to the face of Sigurd Agvald, for both of them were excited by the idea of such an adventure, and neither wanted to go without the other.

"My good friend Halvdan the Tall can best answer that question," returned the sea-king. "I am sending a messenger to his house at the next full moon to learn his will. It may be that he will wish his son to return home instead of sailing over the Path of the Sea Birds with us."

"Oh, Sigurd Agvald," exclaimed Leif. "I will pray to Odin and to Thor that my father may let me come with you and Erik. I have three brothers older than myself. I was often told before I came hither that three boys in the house were enough, and that four was one too many."

"Two is not one too many, my child," said Gyda, tapping him kindly on the shoulder. "But now comb your hair and make yourselves seemly, for Elskil will soon be here."

The two boys had been dressed till then in plain woollen tunics, without girdles or clasps, and their feet were bare. Now, however, in honour of Elskil, they buckled on their belts with clasps of bronze in the shape of dragons and flung on their short blue cloaks which were fastened on the shoulder with brooches of bright enamel. Long trousers of brown wool and shoes of reindeer-skin like those of Sigurd Agvald completed their attire, and when their hair had been duly smoothed with a comb of walrus ivory they looked very different from the two wild and shaggy imps who had galloped round the field that morning on the backs of Haki and Hugleik.

"Erik," said Leif, as they gathered up the chess-board and the set of chess-men for which they knew Elskil would ask, "do you think we shall be allowed to take our ponies with us, if we sail over the Path of the Sea Birds?"

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

Erik looked grave. He had forgotten this point.

"I cannot tell. There will be little room on the *Raven of the Wind*. Those barrels of mead and stacks of pork take up such a lot. Don't you remember? When we watched the loading of the ship before the last voyage we wondered how the chests of weapons would be got on board, much less the empty chests for plunder. And after fifty sea-kings had taken their places at the oars, there was no space for the smallest foal."

"I remember," said Leif, nodding. "It was a brave sight, when the purple sail filled with the wind, and the oars smote the water, and the burnished shields slung along her sides glittered in the sun. But I do not think there would have been a corner into which a live pony could be squeezed. And you know that Haki kicks if he is frightened."

"So does Hugleik—but not so hard as Haki."

"That's because he is a lazy pony. Haki is full of spirit. I think I would rather have a pony that kicked than a pony that didn't kick."

"Unless he kicked *you*."

"Haki never kicks me. Or anybody. He just kicks."

"Well, Hugleik would be a better pony on a boat."

"I've never heard of a pony being taken on board a boat," admitted Leif, with regret. "I don't think we shall be allowed to take either of them. But I daresay there will be ponies in the country to which we are going."

"I'll never like a pony as much as I do Hugleik," said Erik. "If we must leave him, I should like to give him to Elskil, who doesn't want to ride too fast or too far, and who would give him lots to eat."

Leif said nothing. He was wondering to whom he could give the more lively Haki if he had to leave *him* behind.

Neither boy was at all surprised to hear Sigurd Agvald say that nothing had been decided as to the course that he would steer. They both knew that such decisions were not usually made until a ship was well out to sea, and then it was often left to chance. Sometimes a spear was tossed into the air, and the ship sailed in the direction to which it pointed as it fell.

One of the thralls now poked his uncombed head in at the door and shouted that Elskil the skald was waiting outside.

"I hope he will let us do our lessons in the meadow to-day," whispered Erik to Leif, as they hurried to greet the old man.

THE YOUNG SEA-KINGS

Elskil was a very old man—nobody knew quite how old. His face was wrinkled like a walnut-shell, and his long, thin beard was silver-white as the petal of a daisy. When he sat—as he was now sitting on his shaggy little horse—he stooped, with hunched shoulders. But when he alighted and stood to receive the greetings of his pupils, he stood erect, with his chin up and his shoulders back.

One of the thralls came and led the horse away to graze in the field with Haki and Hagleik—which it seemed glad to do—and Elskil, laying a withered hand on the head of each boy, said, "My children, the Path of the Sea Birds is smooth to-day, and the sky is bright. Let us remain in this sweet, warm air. Bring your chess-board and your harp and the wand of runes, and we will sit together on that ledge of rock under the shadow of the *Raven of the Wind*."

"I have brought the chess-board," cried Erik, "but I can soon fetch the wand of runes."

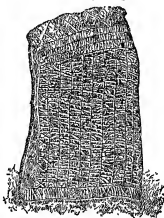
"And I will get the harp," chimed in Leif, dashing off in quest of it.

The "wand of runes" was a strip of wood, dark and glossy with age, upon which were carved the queer scratches forming the Norse writing. There was something mysterious about the runes, something almost magical. The Norsemen believed that they had been taught to their ancestors by the great god Odin himself, in the dim dawn of time, when the god Thor had taught them the art of the smith, and the god Ægir had shown them the way across the sea.

Elskil, with the wand between his hands, called upon the boys to point out the various marks upon it and to explain their meaning.

"If," said he, "you do not master the nine accomplishments you will be the barbarians that our enemies say we are."

"Which are the nine accomplishments?" asked Leif. "The runes, I know, and the game of chess, and playing on the harp; but these be three only."



RUNES ON STONE

"That is well asked, my child. The nine, as I would have you remember, are these: reading and, if need be, writing; working in metals; sliding on snow-shoes, shooting with bow-and-arrow; plying the oar; playing the harp; making good verses. To these some men add swimming, wrestling, throwing spears at a mark, and riding barebacked. But," he added, with a smile, "certain of these things Elskil the skald cannot teach you. Time was when he might have done it. But now younger men than he must be your guides."

"My father said yesterday," said Erik, "that we are to learn the craft of metals from Trygir the smith—he who goes on the *Raven of the Wind* to mend the swords and spears and shields if they be broken in battle."

"It is a good thought," answered Elskil, approvingly. "Trygir is very skilful in that craft."

"There is another thing I want to learn," said Leif. "That is, to leap from one oar to another as the boat goes through the water. Sigurd Agvald could do it when he was young, and Trygir says he can do it now, but I have never seen him try."

"Before you yourself try, it were well that you should be a strong swimmer," Elskil warned him, "for in my time I have seen the thing done, and most often he that did it ended his exploit in the water."

Leif and Erik laughed at the idea and secretly hoped that Trygir, who was inclined to boast, might do the same some day when they were there to see.

"And now," said Elskil, "we will recite some texts from the *Hávamál*."

This book was very holy in the eyes of the Norsemen, for they believed that, like the runes, it came straight from Odin himself. It contained the commandments of the god.

"Tell me," demanded the skald, "what are the three virtues which Odin would wish his people to practise in their own houses?"

"Temperance, hospitality, prudence," answered Leif, promptly.

"And you, Erik, what are the virtues of war?"

"Valour, faithfulness, patience under pain."

"That is well said. Now take your harp, Leif, and while you play the tune I taught you the last time, Erik can recite a poem of his own, to prove that he has understood the rules of verse."

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Many boys in other countries and other centuries might have found such a command very alarming; even the young Egyptian who recited passages from the Book of the Dead, the young Greek or Roman repeating lines from Homer or Virgil, was not obliged to make up verses himself while a schoolfellow kept time on the harp. And the boys of later ages, the boys of the present day, who have to compose Latin verses in school, are not expected to repeat them to an accompaniment of music. Leif and Erik were quite calm about it all. Music and the laws of verse were two lessons which the sons of the sea-kings often learned as if they were only one lesson.

"May I make my song of what I will?" asked Erik.

"You may—so long as it does not tell of some foolish matter, such as a man trying to leap from oar to oar and tumbling into the water."

The wise old skald had guessed what was in the boy's mind, though Erik knew perfectly well that he would not be allowed to do anything of the sort.

After a moment's reflection, and with a nod to Leif as a signal to strike a chord on his harp, the young poet began:

A mighty sea-king,
Strong Sigurd Agvald,
Will fare over the waters.
With him will warriors
Go very gladly,
Seeking rich treasure.
Far will they journey,
New countries finding,
New seas o'er-sailing.
At his returning,
When the ship resteth
High on the sea-shore,
There will be singing,
Feasting and pleasure,
Mead-horns o'er-flowing.

The skald, beating time with his hand, listened attentively to the little song and smiled when it came to an end.

"That is not ill done, my child. But why do you make verses of things that are yet to be? Why do you not sing of the great deeds of the Vikings, their travels and conquests, of which I have told you?"

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

"My mind," said Erik, frankly, "loves better to go forward than to turn back."

"So be it. But remember that a ship often departs empty and returns full."

He took up the chess-board of polished pinewood and pale yellow bone, and the boys produced from a carved casket a set of walrus-ivory 'men,' roughly fashioned to resemble horsemen. There was perfect silence when they began to play, sitting on the shore with the board on the ground between them. Not far away, its shadow shielding them from the sun, the *Raven of the Wind* was beached. Her striped sail of red and purple was furled; no oars were in her rowlocks; no round, bright shields hung from the hooks along her sides. But men were moving to-and-fro on board; there was a clinking sound from the part of the ship where the weapon-chest was stored, and presently the sturdy figure of Trygíř the smith emerged from the little cabin under the steering-platform on the starboard side. He had a hammer in his hand, and he was evidently busy.

Elskil peered up at him.

"Strong Sigurđ Agvald," he quoted, "will fare over the waters."

Erik, intent upon the next move in his game against Leif, did not notice that the skald had paid him the compliment of quoting the words of his ode, but Leif did, and was duly impressed. Neither boy had made the winning move when Elskil decided that they had had enough chess for that day. Lessons were nearly over. It would soon be time to eat again, and, though temperance at table was one of the virtues praised in the *Hávamál*, the Vikings were always hearty eaters.

"Oh, Elskil," said Erik, a little timidly. "It is true that Sigurđ Agvald my father is soon going forth across the sea again. And maybe he will come back to fetch my mother, and me, and Leif, and take us with him to make our home in some strange land."

"So had I heard, my child. And so it often is in these days. When I was a young man we thought more of bringing our booty home to our own Norselands, but now these 'settlements,' as they call them, are all the fashion."

"You have been along the Path of the Sea Birds, master," said Erik. "You can tell us something of the lands where

THE YOUNG SEA-KINGS

maybe we shall dwell. Will you not tell us something? My father says little—and he does not like us to ask questions.”

“It is long since I went on a Viking raid,” mused the old man, fingering his white beard. “I was young—not much older than you boys—when I went with my father to that island in the west that is called Ireland. A green land, my children, where there is more rain than snow.”

“Some of our golden goblets and candlesticks at home came from Ireland,” said Leif.

“Doubtless, for in that country there are great buildings of stone where many men dwell, worshipping their gods, and in those buildings are such treasures as you can hardly dream of—lamps and salvers, cups and candlesticks, all of pure gold or bright silver. It is the same in the land of the Franks and in the land of the Anglo-Saxons.”

“Do men worship Odin and Thor there?” asked Erik.

“No. They have another faith. They are Christians. They adore one God and many lesser gods whom they call ‘saints’. But it is no faith for a Noiseman. It teaches you to love your enemies.”

“No man could love an enemy,” declared Erik, stoutly.

“It cannot be easy. But the Christians expect men to do many things that are difficult. This I learned from an Anglo-Saxon boy whom we took captive in one of our raids on the land of Mercia. I brought him home, thinking that he would make a good thiall, for he was tall and strong. But he grieved for his own people until he died of grief.”

“What of the land of Mercia?” prompted Erik.

“It is different from the land of Ireland—colder, wilder, with a craggy coast and swift rivers. And there are churches—as they call them—with stone walls as broad as a Viking boat is at its broadest part.”

“I hope we shall go to Ireland,” said Erik.

“Not I,” cried Leif. “If there is more rain than snow how shall we run on our snow-shoes, or play snowballs, or slide on the ice?”

“Well, children, Odin grant that wherever ye go ye remember all that Elskil the skald has taught you!”

With these words the old man dismissed his pupils and turned towards the house of Sigurd Agvald, where the tall sea-king came out to meet him.

“Welcome, Elskil. You come at a happy hour. My

friend Hacon Skoftason comes with his sons to eat with me to-day, and if you will touch your harp for us, and recite some old tale of Norse valour, you will make our hearts glad."

Erik and Leif, who had followed the skald to the house, exchanged excited glances. The coming of Hacon Skoftason was news to them, and it meant good things to eat and much mirth and asking of riddles and telling of old tales.

Instead of going indoors the boys lingered on the threshold, waiting to see the arrival of Sigurd Agvald's guest. Hacon Skoftason was quite a famous person in that part of Norway, and even in those other Norse lands, Sweden and Denmark, for he had been on many journeys and had brought back much treasure to his house, which was about twelve miles from the house of Sigurd Agvald. The two men had been friends from childhood, for Hacon had been brought up in the family of Sigurd Agvald's father, just as Leif was being brought up with Erik.

"I wonder," said Leif, "if Hacon Skoftason is coming with us to our new home across the sea."

Already he had made up his mind that he was going with his friends, and they were to have a new home somewhere.

"Perhaps your father also will come," suggested Erik. "He has a fine ship, and much battle-gear. And your brothers are old enough to fight now."

Leif did not answer. He was proud of his father, but rather afraid of him, for Halvdan the Tall was a stern man who cared little for small boys, and, after the death of Leif's mother some years before, the smallest of his boys had had a rather unhappy life—until he was placed in the care of Sigurd Agvald and Gyda. His brothers he hardly remembered. The youngest was five years older than he, and he had never been able to share in their games.

"Look," he said, "here comes Hakon Skoftason in his chariot!" Along the rough track through the meadows was jolting a clumsy but very magnificent four-wheeled waggon, made of carved and painted pine-wood decorated with thin plates of bronze, and drawn by two shaggy, sturdy ponies.

In it sat a tall man wearing a rich, green mantle, sewn down the seams with glittering threads of gold. His reddish hair, long and sleek, was circled by a fillet of gold; round his neck hung a pendant of gilded bronze inlaid with runic spells in bright enamel. He had so many rings on his hands that they

THE YOUNG SEA-KINGS

reached as far as the middle joint of each finger. Truly, Hacon Skoftason was paying the highest honour to Sigurd Agvald by coming to feast with him in such rich array!

On either side of the waggon rode his two sons, also in their gayest clothes, the bridles of their ponies jingling with ornaments of silver and bronze.

Sigurd Agvald and Gyda came forward with outstretched hands to greet the newcomers.

"Odin send ye happy days," said Hacon Skoftason, climbing nimbly out of the waggon.

Two thralls ran to unharness the waggon-team and lead them to graze in the fenced field, while a third took charge of the horses of the two young Vikings.

"Enter and eat," urged Sigurd Agvald, hospitably.

"Enter and eat—and drink," added his wife.

These words were a signal to the two boys, who promptly fetched three ivory drinking-horns, which Gyda filled with deep golden mead, and which they then offered solemnly to the three guests.

The Vikings always emptied their drinking-horns at one gulp. To have sipped the mead would have been most discourteous, and it was far from the wishes of Hacon Skoftason to be anything but polite to his old friend. Handing his empty horn to Erik, he wiped his dripping moustache with his wrist. His sons did the same, and Sigurd Agvald conducted them all to chairs of honour at the centre of the long trestle-table which stretched across the top of the hall.

On that table were cups and platters of silver, the spoil of many raids, but there was no table-cloth, and nearly six hundred years would pass before forks were known. The Vikings ate with a short bronze knife in one hand, using the other hand to hold the meat and to lift it to their lips. As roast pork was their favourite dish, they made themselves very greasy during meals, and had to wash their fingers afterwards, in large, shallow bowls of warm water.

After the newcomers had exchanged greetings with Elskil, they all seated themselves, and the feast began.



NORSE DRINKING-HORN

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

All through the summer afternoon and part of the long, bright evening the Vikings continued to eat and drink, pausing now and then to listen to the lays of Elskil, or to ask one another riddles, which was a favourite amusement. Or sometimes the harp would go round from hand to hand, and guest and host would take it in turn to make up a song, always keeping carefully to the verse-laws which each had learned from some wise old skald in the days of his youth. The two hounds, who were apt to howl at the sound of the harp, were given bones to gnaw and driven to the farther end of the hall.

Erik and Leif, as befitted their years, sat on a bench at the lower end of the trestle-table and took no part in the conversation. From her place in one of the three bronze-cased chairs of honour Gyda kept a watchful eye on the boys and sent them warning glances if she thought they were taking more roast pork and mead than might be good for them. Much of the talk was too hard for them to follow—full of strange words, many of them picked up here and there in distant lands, and dealing with such questions of seamanship and battle, winds, waves, and weapons, as only full-grown and far-travelled Norsemen could understand.

Erik looked admiringly and a little curiously at the sons of Hacon Skoftason, both of whom had already been on many dangerous voyages, though neither was as much as twice his own age—which was ten. The elder had already a noble, fair moustache, drooping in a carefully arranged curl on either side of his mouth, but it was the younger, whose moustache was not yet remarkable, who showed most skill when the harp went round.

It was while this younger son was reciting his song that Elskil made a sign to his two small pupils to leave their places on the long bench and come and stand on either side of his chair that they might listen better. The song told first of the great Norse god Odin, and how he loved his Norsemen and taught them how to sail their long ships, and write the magic runes and use sword and spear and bow. And then it went on to tell of some of the great victories gained by the children of Odin in lands beyond the Path of the Sea Birds.

"That is well told, my son," said Elskil, approvingly. "No pupil of mine ever did better. But now let us hear a tale such as may make us first laugh and then grieve."

THE YOUNG SEA-KINGS

The young Viking mused for a moment, and then said, "Shall I tell of King Alf and his brother Yngi?"

"Tell on," said Sigurd Agvald.

So they heard again a tale which they all knew already, but had never heard told so well. It was of a lazy and foolish king called Alf, who, like Huggleik, loved better to sit at home than to go to sea, and to go to bed early than to stay up asking riddles and singing songs. He had a brother called Yngi who was just the opposite to himself. Yngi won fame in battle; he went to far countries and brought rich treasures home. And Queen Bera, the wife of the lazy Alf, was often heard to remark that Yngi was a better man than he. This was true, but Alf did not like to be reminded of it, and the queen would have been wise to keep her opinion to herself.

Now, one year, in the time of harvest, Yngi came home to Upsala from a great raid, and all men praised him, and there was a feast given in the palace to honour him. He and the queen sat in their carved bronze chairs, but a third chair stood empty. It was the king's chair. Presently the king came, and he found that no man had missed him, for they were all very merry, drinking mead and singing. And he saw that the merriest among them were his brother and his queen. Then Alf went up to the place of honour where they sat, drew a sword from under his cloak, and stabbed Yngi. And Yngi leaped up and seized his own sword and made a thrust at the king. And so they both fell dead at the feet of Queen Bera, these two brothers of royal breed. And men buried them together in one great mound, laying their battle-gear beside them.

Everyone laughed at the idea of a king who liked going to bed early; but by the time the story had come to a sad end the two small boys were so sleepy that Erik whispered to Leif that there was something to be said for Alf. Gyda saw that both children were nodding where they stood at the back of Elskil's chair, and she called them softly to her.

"Children," said Gyda. "You are not wont to wake so late. Go now, making no sound, to your beds and lay yourselves down to sleep, first taking off your shoes, and unclasping your girdles and your brooches. Maybe the feast will still last some hours."

Very gladly Erik and Leif obeyed, and soon after they were curled up on their pallets at the foot of the empty four-post

bed. Neither the voices of the people at the table, nor their songs and laughter, broke through the deep sleep of two tired small boys. They did not even wake when Hacon Skoftason and his sons departed, with loud, cheerful farewells, and the Viking's waggon rumbled away in the pale purple light which fills the midnight sky in those northern lands. So it was that they missed hearing his last words, which would certainly have interested them very much.

"Odin prosper you, Sigurd Agvald," shouted Hacon Skoftason, as his waggon-team began to move, "and maybe when next we feast together it will be in some goodly hall far beyond the sea!"

VII

THE SWINEHERD'S YOUNGEST SON

A.D. 1031

THE sound of a horn, blown loudly and long, woke Ælfric from his slumbers. He knew what it was. His father's swineherd was taking his herd of swine out into the forest to feed. That sound was a signal to the



ANGLO-SAXON KING IN BED

beasts, and they came scampering and jostling out of their pen as soon as they heard it.

"Time to get up," thought Ælfric, gazing drowsily at the wooden rafters above his head. The morning breeze, coming through the narrow, rounded opening which served as a window, flapped the crimson curtain of his bed. It swung from iron hooks attached to a long rod, and when he pulled it, back it came, with a cheerful, rattling sound.

Each bed in the room had a wooden canopy, from both sides of which curtains were hung. There was space for two boys in Ælfric's bed, but he had it all to himself, for his elder

brother Ædwy was away at a monastery-school. In the finest bed of all, made of carved oak and draped with many-coloured tapestry, his father, Egbert, and his mother, Edyth, were still fast asleep. His sister, Etheldreda, had a narrow couch to herself, and at the foot lay her pet hound, curled up comfortably, with its nose and its tail meeting. Etheldreda was particularly proud of her couch, for it was mounted on four solid wooden wheels, and could be moved nearer the fire in winter or the window in summer. Her brothers secretly envied it and often longed to 'play chariots' with it, but this was not allowed.

Egbert, the father of the children, was an Anglo-Saxon thane, a man of some wealth and importance, who had fought for Edmund Ironside against Canute the Dane in two fierce battles fifteen years before, but now lived on excellent terms with the Danish conquerors. His house was not very far from the scene of Edmund's defeat—Ashington in Essex, the land of the East Saxons—and his followers had not had to carry him many miles from the field where he was wounded to the house where his young wife was waiting anxiously for news of him.

Only one of his four children had then been born—Edwina, the eldest, who was now a novice in the nunnery at Romsey, and whom the younger ones could hardly remember. She had been dedicated to God, in thanksgiving for her father's escape from death, and handed over to the Abbess of Romsey when she was only eight years old.

The house from which she had been so early parted was, like that of Sigurd Agvald more than two hundred years before, a one-storeyed building; but, unlike his, it was divided into different rooms and partly made of stone. Branching off from the large central hall were the bedroom, where the whole family slept, the kitchen, bake-house, brew-house, and the small, circular chapel where any clerical visitor would sing Mass. Over the main door, on the summit of the roof of overlapping slabs of oak, was the skull of a deer, complete with antlers. Opposite the door was the well which supplied the household with water. Right and left were the pig-pens, the sheds where the cows lived, and, farther away, the poultry-yard—protected by a wooden paling—and the sheep-folds.

Every Anglo-Saxon thane farmed his own land, with the aid of his bondsmen, the poor folk, born and brought up upon

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it; and, well protected by Canute's good laws and the strength of Canute's navy, these country gentlemen lived for the most part very contentedly.

Ælfric, having drawn aside his bed-curtains and seen that the sun was shining, decided not to wait to be told to get up. Already a clatter from the kitchen, and the warm, sweet smell of fresh bread from the bake-house, showed that the house-servants, or 'thralls,' were astir and had begun what young Ælfric regarded as the most important work of the day—preparing the morning meal.

He climbed down from his bed—which was rather high—unhooked his green woollen tunic from its peg, slipped it over his shoulders, and proceeded to pull on his long stockings of undyed wool. Then he put on his shoes of dark brown oxhide with pointed toes and a narrow slit down the instep. They were fastened round the ankle with a firm strap.

Unlike the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons did not begin each day with a bath. Ælfric thought he had done all that was required of a well-brought-up boy when he went out into the yard and dabbled his hands and dipped his face in a stone trough of clear, cold water. After that he hastily passed a carved wooden comb through his thick, fair hair.



COMB CASE

Meanwhile Etheldreda had pushed her hound off her bed with a friendly kick and was now sitting up re-braiding her own long, shining locks. The hound, whose name was 'Stark,' meaning 'strong,' showed his indignation at being roused and his contempt for the hair-braiding idea by scampering out through the door which Ælfric had left open. All this scuffling and pattering awoke the master and mistress



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of the house, who were soon making themselves ready for breakfast in their own slow and deliberate way.

Ælfric had a hound of his own, a big, fierce fellow called 'Honey.' It was one of his little jokes to give it that name after Etheldreda had called her much smaller and feebler pet by the name of 'Stark.' The two dogs were quite good friends, and, when Ælfric released Honey from the kennel where he had spent the night, they both went bounding off over the still-dewy, green meadows with loud barks of joy.

Eastward, as far as the eye could reach, stretched pastures and cornfields. To the north and west was a belt of dark forest-land, where the swine found good grazing on acorns and beech-mast. To the south were the marshes separating that part of Essex from the famous and ancient city of Londonburgh. Ælfric had a great desire to visit Londonburgh. He knew that it had held out for Edmund Ironside even when almost all his other strongholds had yielded to the victorious Danes; he knew that it had been walled and fortified by Alfred the Great, the king whose name was already a legend not quite forty years after his death. He had heard much of its beauty, its fine buildings, its churches of stone, its busy streets where Anglo-Saxons and Danes now worked and traded peacefully together—though not long before they had been mortal enemies.

But it never occurred to young Ælfric that it would be fun to live in a place like Londonburgh, with walls and houses, streets and churches, hemming you in on every side. Like his Anglo-Saxon ancestors, who had settled in East Anglia after the Roman Empire had crumbled and the Roman province of Britain had been left undefended, he was an open-air-loving countryman. He took a constant delight in all the doings of the people on his father's lands, from the days when the plough drove deep into the brown clods, through the time of the young green grain to the golden wealth of harvest. He was keenly interested in the pigs, and, though the shepherd-boy would not believe him, he declared that he knew all the sheep by sight and could give each of them a name—if he had the mind.

Walking in the wake of the two excited dogs, he sniffed the cool air and peered up with what he thought was a real farmer's eye at the silver-white clouds moving slowly across the pale blue sky.

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"A fine day," said he, "but too windy for hawking. I must ask leave to go down to the village and get some more fish-hooks. It may be good fishing-weather to-morrow."

Hunting, hawking, and fishing were favourite sports of these English thanes, and boys were taught the laws and manners of all three as soon as they were old enough to sit a horse, hold a falcon on the wrist, or drop a baited line into a lake or river.

A faint cry from the direction of the house warned Ælfric that it was time to return. Etheldreda was standing in the doorway, calling in a high, piping voice, and her brother naturally thought that she was calling him. But as he drew nearer he realized that she was calling her hound.

"Stark is all right," he told her, in a lordly tone. "He won't come to any harm if he is with me."

"Won't he, indeed!" rejoined Etheldreda. "What about the time when he fell into the mill-stream and was nearly sucked under by the wheel—and the time when he went down a rabbit-hole and didn't come up again?"

"He *did* come up again, or he wouldn't be here now," objected Ælfric, not enjoying these sisterly reproaches.

"He didn't," said Etheldreda. "He had to be pulled out by the youngest son of the swineherd."

"Well," retorted Ælfric, "I'm too big to creep down a rabbit-hole. And I'm glad I am."

Stark now came scampering up and seemed to be trying to tell his little mistress how much he had enjoyed his brief outing.

"He came with me of his own accord," added Ælfric. "He'd rather come with me. I can run. Girls can't run. Their gowns are too long."

"I can run, I can," cried Etheldreda. "If I hold up my gown in both hands, I *can* run."

"What is this, my child?"

Her mother's voice, quiet but disapproving, caused her hastily to drop the embroidered hem of her long, blue skirt.

"Ælfric is teasing me, mother—because I cannot run as he can."

"Do not be foolish, daughter. It is true that you cannot—or, at least, you should not—run as he can. But you can do things that a boy cannot do. You can spin—and bake—and sew."

"I would rather run," murmured Etheldreda, but not loud enough for Edyth to overhear.

"Some boys *do* bake," remarked Ælfric. "There is a boy not much older than I at the bakery in the village. I talk to him sometimes. He once let me mould a little piece of dough into the shape of a little horse, and then he baked it for me."

Pushing her two children gently before her, Edyth entered the great hall where the trestle-tables had been set, and the first meal of the day was waiting. Egbert was waiting too, in his oaken chair with carved lions' heads on the arms, and rather impatiently beating his foot on the floor.

As this was a family with more elegant ideas than some, a linen cloth had been spread on the smaller table where the thane and his family sat. The long, narrow table where the thralls fed had no such drapery, and, though frequently scoured with sand, it was much stained with mead, ale, and hot pork-fat. Knives and forks there were none, but each person drew a short knife from his or her girdle, to cut up bread or meat, and Egbert and Edyth had bronze spoons. Instead of plates, there were thick slices of bread at each place. When these had done duty as plates, they were broken in two and either thrown to the hounds or tossed into a large basket to be given later to the poor.

Pottery beakers full of golden brown ale stood beside these trenchers, and two thralls, each with a linen napkin dangling from his girdle, now brought in the dishes with the grilled trout which formed the chief part of the breakfast.

"Is it too windy for hawking to-day, father?" asked Ælfric, setting down his half-empty beaker.

"It is much too windy, my son."

"Do you think it will be a good day for fishing to-morrow?"

"I think it may be—a quiet, cloudy day."

"I should like to go down to the village, please, father, and get some fish-hooks from the blacksmith."

"Certainly you may go. I will give you some silver pennies. Tell John the smith that we need a new plough-share, and a new tip for the ox-goad."

"We shall not be ploughing again till after Christmas," said Ælfric, who prided himself on his knowledge of farming.

"True, my son. But a wise man looks ahead."

The thane was always pleased when Ælfric showed an interest in such things. His elder son, Ædwy, had never

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shown any. But then Ædwy was a delicate, dreamy boy, quite unlike his sturdy brother, and the cloister was the proper place for him. Egbert, though he was glad to have a monk in the family as well as a nun—a monk who would one day be a priest and pray for them all—often thanked heaven for sending him a younger son who loved hunting and farming as he himself did. He encouraged these tastes in Ælfric and liked nothing better than to take the boy with him when he went to look at his flocks and fields. Unlike the ancient Roman father, he did not discuss the events of the day with him. There was room in his head for only a few idgas, very simple and homely ones.

For politics he cared little, now that Saxon and Dane had settled down peacefully together. And though he had a deep respect for the memory of Alfred the Great, he found it rather hard to understand why that monarch should have set so much store by book-learning—it was well enough for priests and monks, but of little interest to a man of action. If, aigued Egbert, such a man wanted something more courtly and gracious, let him not pore over vellum pages but twang the strings of a harp. The thane himself had no ear for music, but he was willing that his son should learn, and Edyth, whose mother had been brought up with King Alfred's daughters, was anxious that her son should be a harper, as King Alfred was. Ælfric himself was pleased at the idea. Wandering gleemen (minstrels) were welcome at Ashington, and one of Edyth's kinsmen, a powerful thane, could make music as well as any of them. A harper from Londonburgh was coming to spend some weeks in the household and to teach Ælfric all he knew—or as much as could be taught in that time.

"Wife," said Egbert, turning to Edyth, "the harper from Londonburgh should be here to-day. Have you thought whom we shall give him to wait upon him while he is here?"

"I have thought of it. And I have chosen the swineherd's youngest son."

"That child? Why, he is no older than Ælfric."

"True, husband. But he came to me yesterday, and prayed, almost with tears, that he might have some work about the house while the harper tarries with us. He is a strange boy, not like the other bondsfolk. When gleemen come to the village, he will do nothing but stand and listen to them. Once

when my kinsman Alfrith was playing the harp after supper in this hall, this boy was found crouching in a corner."

"To snatch some morsels from the table, no 'doubt," growled Egbert.

"Nay, husband, not so. They are honest folk. He had taken nothing. And I said no word to you at the time, fearing you might be angry and that his father might beat him. It was the sound of the harp that had drawn him hither."

"You are always full of these pretty notions," said Egbert. "It comes of having had a mother who was brought up among princesses."

"King Alfred himself was a skilful harper," Edyth reminded him, "and I am sure he would have seen no harm if some swineherd's son of his had loved to listen. One of his own gleemen was the son of a thrall whom the king had had taught. I hope you will not forbid me to do this thing. The boy is a good boy, and I think his father is hard upon him. Ædwy liked him, too."

"Oh, well," said Egbert, "I have no objection. And if I had, King Alfred would have the last word. Let the swineherd's son wait upon the harper. But let him wash himself first."

With these words the thane pushed back his carved chair and, after wiping his knife on the bread that had served as a plate, thrust it back into his leather girdle.

Ælfric had listened with interest to this conversation. Though he was not particularly fond of music, he looked forward to the coming of the harper from Londonburgh. It made him feel important. And he felt, too, that it would be great fun to amuse the company after supper by playing sweet tunes on the harp as kinsman Alfrith did. Lessons might leave him less time for sport and for riding out with his father to see how the crops and the livestock were doing, but that could not be helped. As for Hedd, the swineherd's youngest son, he was quite willing that the boy should listen and admire. Ædwy, he remembered, had taken more notice of that queer, puny little fellow than of any of the other bondsmen's children and had saved him many a beating when the swineherd had been angry at his son's awkwardness and forgetfulness. But Ædwy was a queer fellow, too. He actually wanted to learn to read and write!

"I cannot take you with me this morning, my son, but here

are four silver pennies," remarked the thane, flinging his short, square cloak across his shoulders as he spoke. "Do not tarry too long in the village; you must be here when the harper comes. He will reach us soon after noon, if he leaves London-burgh early."

"Oh, yes, father. I will be home long before that."

"And that no time may be lost, he may as well give you a lesson at once."

"When he has eaten and drunk, and reposed himself after his ride," added Edyth. "And, my son, bring me four needles with your fish-hooks."

Egbert now proceeded to prepare himself for his morning visit to his fields and his flocks. His ruddy face was smoothly shaven, and the fair beard, drooping in two points from beneath his chin, was neatly combed. On his head was a red woollen cap with a peak on the top and a band of embroidery in gold and green threads round the upturned edge. He went out, mounted his sturdy grey nag, and jogged gently in the direction of the forest.

The thralls meanwhile had gathered up all the broken pieces of bread in a large basket, which they carried to the chief entrance of the great hall. Edyth followed them at a little distance, leading her daughter by the hand, but Ælfric slipped quietly away, dragging Honey with him. The boy always tried to avoid the daily doling out of food to the beggars who gathered to receive it, and his father, though sometimes he had to stand beside Edyth and take part in the proceedings, also managed to disappear as often as he could. No reminders that King Alfred would have acted otherwise had any effect upon him.

As Ælfric scampered off along the track leading to the village, he could hear the murmuring and babbling of the crowd change to cries of greeting and loud blessings as Edyth, aided by Etheldreda, appeared on the threshold and began to hand round the contents of the basket. It was an ancient Anglo-Saxon custom, and a kindly one. Edyth often reminded her children that St Oswald, the warrior saint, who had defeated the Welsh pagans in a great battle some three hundred years before, was never known to eat any meal without giving what remained on the table to the poor at his gate.

Meanwhile the thane had reached the outskirts of the forest,

where a sound of scrambling and grunting told him that his pigs were enjoying themselves. His swineherd, a short, surly-looking fellow in a tunic and leggings of sheepskin, came forward to greet him with an awkward bow.

"Do all my swine thrive?" asked Egbert.

"Yea, lord, all of them."

"Have you mended the palings round their pen?"

"I could not do it myself, lord. I had not the skill. But Garth the carpenter has done it."

"Good. You may give him the weakest piglet of the next litter as a reward."

A large, friendly pig had strolled up and stood looking contented while the swineherd scratched its back with the tip of his staff.

"Lord," said the swineherd, humbly, "I would speak to you of my youngest son. He is a foolish boy. He cares for nothing but to listen to the chanting of monks or the harping of minstrels. I have beaten him well and often. But now it seems the Lady Edyth has had mercy upon the fool. We are beholden to the Lady Edyth, my wife and I."

"Look to it that he does not smell of his father's craft when he comes to wait on the harper from Londonburgh," called Egbert over his shoulder, as he touched his horse with his heel and rode on.

Ælfric had already made his way to the rambling street of one-storeyed wooden houses which formed the village. At one end was the church, also built of wood, and at the other the green, with a pond where ducks swam, and an ancient oak-tree where aged villagers were wont to meet and discuss the affairs of the neighbourhood. A deep clang of iron smiting iron showed that the smith was busy, but he put down his hammer when the thane's young son stopped by the forge.

"I want some fish-hooks," said Ælfric, "and my lady-mother wants some needles."

"Ah," replied the smith. "What would you do without me, young master? Whether it be a plough-share or a pruning-hook, a needle or a goad, a fish-hook or a spade, it is to me that you must come."

Ælfric nodded. He had heard such words from the smith many times before. "Also," he said, "my father bade me tell you that we need a new plough-share and a tip for an ox-goad."

"Good," cried the smith, rubbing his grimy palms on his

THE SWINEHERD'S YOUNGEST SON

leather apron. "The worthy thane knows that such things take time. Nothing is well done that is done in haste. And so, young master, a harper is coming from Londonburgh, I hear?"

"Yes. To teach me to play the harp. Like my kinsman, Alfrith."

"And Hedd, the swineherd's youngest son, is to wait upon the harper, they say. A great honour for Hedd—if it be so."

"It is so," said Ælfric, shortly. He knew that the man was the worst gossip in the village, and his mother had warned him not to be drawn into talk with him.

The smith strode across to the side of his smithy, where, upon iron pegs made by his own hands, hung strings of fish-hooks; and from a shelf above he took a handful of iron needles.¹ Ælfric, feeling very important, produced four silver pennies from the leather pouch on his girdle. Each bore a rough likeness of King Canute, with his crown on his head and a sceptre in his hand.

"How many?" asked the boy, who knew pretty well what the right answer would be.

"One penny for the hooks, and one for the needles," answered the smith, giving him both hooks and needles with one powerful fist while with the other he clutched the coins.

Ælfric whistled to Honey, who had been keeping an eye on the smith's tabby cat, and went up the straggling street towards the church. On the way he met his friend the baker's boy and stopped to chat with him. Here also he found that the coming of the harper from Londonburgh was a topic of great interest. The baker's boy seemed to think it a very remarkable event, and Ælfric felt more important than ever. Presently a glance at the sun told him that it was time to make for home. Without pausing to spend one of the two remaining pennies on a honey-cake, he whistled again to Honey, and they set off.

Once clear of the village, he broke into a run, Honey galloping beside him, nor did he slow down until he reached the scattered huts on the outskirts of his father's domain. From one of these a boy came shyly forth as he drew near. It was Hedd, the swineherd's youngest son, a thin, awkward creature with large eyes peering out under a dangling fringe of hay-coloured hair. Hedd was cleaner than usual, as Ælfric saw

¹ Steel needles were then unknown in England

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

at once, and he seemed somehow to have got hold of a bit of old comb, for his locks were unwontedly smooth, though badly in need of clipping.

Ælfric halted when he saw him.

"Are you coming to the hall, Hedd?" he asked.

"By your leave, my lord Ælfric. I am to begin my service at the hall to-day."

"You can come with me."

Hedd shot a grateful glance at the boy who, though no older than himself, was so much taller and broader and better to look upon. •

"Would you rather be a gleeman than a swineherd, Hedd?" asked Ælfric, as they trotted along.

"I would, indeed."

"It is a merrier life. Did you ever hear that one of King Alfred's gleemen was the son of a thrall, like you?"

"Was he, in truth? That is like a fairy-tale. It is only in fairy-tales that the youngest son of a poor man wins his heart's desire."

"Youngest sons are always lucky," agreed Ælfric, "even in the Bible. As the priest was telling us on Sunday. About Joseph, you know."

Hedd opened his mouth and shut it again. He had listened more earnestly to the sermon than Ælfric, and he knew that Benjamin, not Joseph, was the youngest. He also kept to himself the belief that whatever might happen in fairy-tales or in the Bible, his own fate as a youngest son would be little bread and many blows. None the less, he was happy for the moment, happier than he had been since Ædwy went away a year before. He was escaping from the home where nobody seemed to want him. He was to wait upon the harper from Londonburgh. He had even had enough breakfast that morning, for his mother, saying she did not wish him to disgrace his parents by gobbling like a wolf as soon as he got a chance, had given him for once a fair share of that humble meal.

As the two boys drew near the house, Etheldreda came out—as quickly as her long skirts would let her.

"Make haste, Ælfric," she called. "The harper is here."

"Oh," cried Hedd, in dismay, "I am late. I should have been here to hold his stirrup."

"Don't be frightened, Hedd," said Etheldreda, kindly.

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"Nobody knew he would be here so early. He is drinking ale in the hall "

And in the hall they found him, with a beaker in his hand and his harp lying on the table beside him. He was a cheerful-looking man, with a twinkling grey eye, and round his neck was a golden chain which he proudly told Edyth was a gift from King Canute himself. The lady of the hall introduced her son to his teacher, and even spated a kind word to Hedd, who, she said, loved harp-music so much that he had begged that he might wait on the harper.

Half an hour later Ælfric's first lesson began. Eþheldreda was not there. She was spinning with her mother in an inner room. But Hedd, of course, was standing behind the harper's chair, drinking in every word he spoke.

When the instrument itself had been shown to him and each string struck and each tuning-peg turned up and down, Ælfric felt confident that he could play, if not a whole tune, at least a few notes. The harper let him hold the harp, but somehow he found it hard to hold it the right way. And it seemed that he struck the strings now too violently, now too softly, now too high up, now too low down. Ælfric began to pine for the open fields and to wish that he were running over the grass with Honey instead of twanging away under the reproachful eye of this stranger with the golden chain.

"My young friend," said the harper, at last. "These things are difficult but not impossible. If you do not pay heed to my words, you will never learn "

"I *am* paying heed," muttered Ælfric.

The harper glanced up and saw that Hedd had stolen softly forward from his place behind the chair. The boy's eyes were fixed upon the harp, and his hands were clasped almost as if he were longing to stretch them out and take hold of it but did not dare.

"Not so," said the harper. "By St Erkenwald, not so. This boy here is paying more heed than you."

"Oh, Hedd," retorted Ælfric. "Hedd thinks of nothing else. I have many things to think of. My hound and my hawk, my fishing-lines and hooks, and my father's flocks and fields, which will one day be mine."

"Ah," said the harper, "so it was not your own wish to play the harp?"

"It *was* my wish," returned the boy, frankly, "but I thought

then it was going to be easy. Tell me, master, how long will it be before I can play a tune, making no mistakes, and remembering everything?"

"How long? A hundred years—unless you try harder than you have tried yet."

Ælfric's face fell. "I did not know," he faltered, "and I doubt if I can try harder. My—my thoughts fly away."

"Here is one whose thoughts do not fly away," said the harper, pulling Hedd forward. "Now, boy, let me see how much *you* have understood of what you have heard."

At first Hedd was too frightened and excited to answer the questions of the harper very quickly, but he soon became more confident, and it was clear that he could understand and remember almost everything. Then the harper told him to take the harp and strike certain strings. The boy's hands were rough and stiff with



ANGLO-SAXON HARPER

toil, but they seemed to have a touch nearly as delicate and sure as the harper's own. Ælfric looked on and marvelled and was secretly thankful that Etheldreda was not there to see. Etheldreda was a very critical little person, and he did not want her to know how badly he had failed. Hedd had lost all his timidity. He was gazing up eagerly into the stranger's face, listening to all he said and obeying his directions with hardly a single blunder. Both of them seemed to have forgotten all about Ælfric.

Presently, however, the harper turned to the boy who was supposed to be his pupil.

"My young friend," said he, "is the thane your father very anxious that you should become skilful in this art?"

"No, master. It was my mother's wish. Because of King Alfred."

"King Alfred? Ah, yes, I understand. Well, I have

something to say to the worthy thane. I only hope the noble Edyth will not be angry with me. No more harping now. I will walk abroad and see these flocks and fields. And Hedd can come with me."

Ælfric watched the two of them departing and did not know whether to be angry, or sorry, or neither, or both. The lesson had certainly not been a success, and he looked forward with no pleasure to having another—many others. But he did not like to feel that he had failed at the first attempt.

"My father will not be angry," he said to himself, "and my mother is never angry long. I hope the harper will tell my father that he cannot teach me to play the harp. I am sure I could never learn."

In the late afternoon they all met at table. Like the Norsemen, Anglo-Saxons, old and young, were hearty eaters, and Edyth prided herself that in no hall throughout the flat, marshy lands of the East Saxons was there better fare, or more abundant, than in the hall of Ashington. The fame of her good housekeeping had spread to Londonburgh, and the harper felt no disappointment when he sat for the first time at her board. Hedd was behind his chair, a different Hedd from the frightened boy of yesterday. His eyes sparkled under his shaggy hair, and his thin cheeks were flushed with joy. Even if the wonderful things of which the harper had spoken that morning should never come to pass, he had known at least one day of hope and happiness—which was more than he had ever thought to know.

Egbert had ridden far afield that day and had found many matters requiring his attention. Beyond a friendly word of greeting to the visitor, he had said little until the principal repast of the day was set before them. He then pledged the company in a gold-mounted horn full of strong ale, and, between mouthfuls of roast pork and barley-cake, began to talk.

"You are going to make a skilful harper of my son," said he. "Some day, no doubt, he will cheer us with a gay melody after supper, even as my wife's kinsman Alfrith does when he sups with us."

Edyth smiled hopefully at the idea, but Ælfric hid his face in a mug of ale, and Etheldreda wondered why her brother seemed so confused. As for the harper, he gave two sharp tugs to his beard before he said anything.

"Noble thane," he said, at last. "You asked me to come hither and to teach your son the lore of the harp. You offered me certain sums of silver in return, and you were willing that I should stay all the summer in your hall."

The noble thane's mouth being full of pork, he merely nodded in reply.

"I have," continued the harper, "given your son one lesson. But, to deal honestly with you, if I gave him fivescore, I could never make a harper of him. He lacks the gift."

Ælfric glanced anxiously from his father to his mother. They both seemed surprised, but he thought that Egbert did not look very sorry.

"The gift," repeated the thane, "he lacks, you say, the gift. Well, there is nothing strange in that. Many a stout fellow, many a good hunter and farmer and fighter, lacks it also. If my son is such a man, I care little whether he twangs the harp or no."

"So I hoped to hear you say, noble thane."

"But, good master harper," said Edyth, "if my son tried harder—if he were diligent and eager to learn——"

"Lady, he is not eager to learn."

"Is this so, my son?" asked Edyth, turning to Ælfric, who was blushing to the tips of his ears.

"I wanted to learn when I thought it would be easy," he confessed.

"Let be, wife, let be," said the thane. "Why should our son be a harp-twanger if he does not wish it? Let him sit his horse well, shoot an arrow straight at the mark, and know all the laws of hunting and farming, and I am willing to do without music after supper."

"But, noble thane, you need not do without music after supper," hinted the harper.

"Ah, I had forgotten. I ask your pardon. You are to abide here for awhile. And, if you had taught my son your craft——"

The thane paused, feeling a little awkward.

"I should have received twenty silver pennies each month," said the harper, coming to his rescue. "Nay, noble thane, we gleemen and minstrels are not all rogues. If you will free me from my part of the bargain, I will free you from yours, and take my departure to-morrow."

"So be it," agreed the thane, "that is honest and fair. But

you must accept some good gift from me before you go. What will you have? A gold bracelet to match your chain? A girdle with a bronze buckle?"

"So please you, I would rather have a living thing."

"A living thing! You harpers do not need pigs or oxen And I cannot spare any of my horses."

"What I ask is neither a pig, nor an ox, nor yet a horse. Let me have, I pray you, this boy, your swinehead's youngest son."

Thethane opened and shut his mouth in astonishment.

"That boy—why, master harper, if you want a servant I will give you one of his brothers, or the son of Garth my carpenter—stout boys who would serve you well. He is a feeble thing—the poorest pig of the litter, as his father often says."

Hedd was trembling with excitement, and dared not raise his eyes. No, the dream could not come true—it would be too wonderful if it did.

"Noble thane," said the harper, "that feeble thing has the gift which your goodly son lacks. Give him to me, and I will make a harper of him. And when he has learned all I can teach, I will bring him back to you, and he will make music for you and your guests after supper."

"Hedd—a harper——" repeated the thane, still amazed.

"Why not, husband?" said Edyth, mildly. "The boy has always loved music. And many thanes have harpers of their own—many thanes less rich than you."

"That is true," agreed her husband. "And though I do not care much for harp-music—or any music but the baying of my hounds—I must admit that it would send me to sleep very soothingly after supper."

"Let me have the boy for a year or two, and you shall have as skilful a harper as any in the land," urged the stranger, seeing that Egbert was beginning to think better of the idea.

Edyth turned to Hedd.

"Child," she said, kindly, "are you willing?"

Hedd could only nod and stammer, but it was clear that he was overjoyed at the prospect.

"Would his father be willing, that's the question," reflected the thane. "They are all my bondsfolk, and I can do with them what I will. But the father is an ill-tempered man, and if he were sullen and angry, my swine might suffer. And if the swine suffer, the pork is not good."



"LET ME HAVE, I PRAY YOU, THIS BOY"

"I think his father would be glad, rather than sorry," suggested Edyth. "Is it not so, Hedd?"

"It is so, noble lady," faltered Hedd. "Nobody will miss me—I am no use at home."

"And you would like to come back some day, and be our harper?"

"Oh, lady, I should ask nothing better in the world!"

"That is agreed, then," said Egbert, quite pleased to have got out of paying twenty silver pennies for nothing. "Take him away to-morrow."

The harper smiled at Hedd.

"Good," said he. "And some day"—he took up his harp and ran his hand over the strings—"some day he will sit in this place and make music for your delight. And it may even be that about his neck there will hang a gold chain, the gift of a king."

Then the harper played—so sweetly that even the thane nodded and smiled with pleasure, and Etheldreda clapped her hands, and Ælfric almost wished that he had tried harder to learn.

Presently the children were sent away to bed, but Hedd, being a bondsman, remained behind the harper's chair and handed him a linen napkin to wipe his hands and lips each time he drank a brimming horn of ale. Finally the chief house-thrall brought in two drinking-horns full of wine made from the thane's own grapes, and Egbert and the harper drank each other's health before they betook themselves to bed.

Ælfric was already fast asleep within his crimson curtains and Etheldreda upon her wheeled couch. Soon the harper, stretched on an oaken couch with his harp near at hand, was deep in slumber. But Hedd, lying on a straw pallet among the snoring house-thralls, could not sleep. He was too happy. The impossible thing had happened.

Good luck had come to the swineherd's youngest son!

VIII

THE PRINCESSES IN THE TOWER

A.D. 1340

THE ravens were croaking—not giumpily, as they sometimes seemed to do—but cheerfully. Some of them were circling round the White Tower in the clear sunshine of an early morning in autumn; others were marching to and fro on the green patch of grass far below, preening their glossy, black plumes and uttering hoarse cries now and then.

The air was full of many sounds. In their barred den the lions of the royal menagerie were roaring for their breakfast. In the guard-room the men-at-arms of the royal bodyguard were burnishing their weapons, or sharpening them on a grindstone that whined as it went round. There was a loud creak and clatter as buckets were drawn up from the well, and a hammering of hoofs as shaggy-footed Flemish horses were led out of their stables. From the river Thames came the shouts of watermen and the splash of oars. The bell of All Hallows' Church on Tower Hill clanged softly. Upon the rippling grey waters of the Tower moat the swans were swimming with their own stately grace. But in their vaulted bedchamber in one of the upper storeys of the Tower the two small daughters of King Edward III and Queen Philippa of Hainault were still fast asleep.

They lay side by side in a four-post bed, draped with curtains of deep blue velvet embroidered with golden leopards; mattress and pillows were covered with green silk, and the coverlet was of many-coloured silken stuff, woven with gold threads in a design of little prim trees. Isabella, the elder of the two, had flung one arm over her sister, whose head nestled against her shoulder. They were still in darkness, though the sun was trying hard to peer through the heavy curtains. There was a faint smell of wax from the night-candle, which had burnt itself out. The children could not have slept unless that little wick, floating on a disc of wax in a silver bowl of water, had been lit before they closed their eyes.

There were no curtains on the two narrow windows, and Lady de la Mote, the princesses' governess, often told them that when she was a child there had been no glass either. Now there were small panes set in a criss-cross of narrow leaden lines, and in the centre of each window the panes were coloured so that they showed the royal arms of England: golden leopards on a red background, and golden lilies on a blue one.

The great iron key turned in the lock of the oaken door, and Lady de la Mote came softly in. A hood of white linen covered her head, and she was wrapped in a long, flowing robe of dark velvet. Then the rings of the bed-curtains rattled as she pulled those curtains back.

"My lady Isabella," she said, "my lady Joanna, it is time for you to wake."

The eight-year-old Isabella opened her eyes.

"I do not want to wake, good lady," she murmured. "I was dreaming that we were in Flanders again."

Her sister, a year younger than herself, remained curled up in the green silk pillows and did not budge.

"Come," said Lady de la Mote, encouragingly. "It is a fine day. If you please, you can feed the lions, or you can go on the river in your barge. And Father Hugh the chaplain is going to write letters from you to the king and queen. Come, my ladies—Maudlyn and Alys are waiting to dress you."

Isabella sat up, pushing her long, reddish-gold hair back from her forehead.

"I will come, lady. But do you think I shall have the same dream again to-night?"

"Who can say? It may be. Now, my lady Joanna——" She drew the glittering coverlet back gently, and Joanna, after a sleepy effort to snuggle down again, decided that she, too, had better obey.

Up the winding stone staircase of the White Tower two sturdy men-servants were hauling a two-handled bronze tub full of steaming water. Alys and Maudlyn took it from them at the door of the princesses' room, carried it in, set it down on the tiled floor, and sprinkled sweet herbs on the water. Then they helped the little girls to wash their faces, hands, and feet. It was not a bath-day, so this did not take long. Alys, who was fat and jolly, pulled on their stockings of fine scarlet wool, while Maudlyn, who was tall and grave, combed and braided their hair.

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

"What kind of net shall I wear to-day, Maudlyn?" asked Isabella.

"The Lady de la Mote has said that your Highness shall wear the net of silver mesh with seed-pearls—and the Lady Joanna likewise."

"I would rather wear the one with the blue turquoise-stones."

"Your pardon, my lady, but the Lady de la Mote——"

"Very well, Maudlyn—if she said so"

Before Queen Philippa of Hainault sent her two little daughters from Flanders to England in the summer of that year 1340, she told them that they must in all things, great and small, obey the lady in whose charge she and King Edward had placed them—and Isabella seldom forgot her mother's parting words.

With quick, clever fingers Maudlyn twisted the strands of shining hair through the pearl-studded silver mesh, which then formed a stiff roll on either side of the



PLANTAGENET LADY AND LITTLE GIRL

princess's face. A band of silver across the forehead kept the two rolls in position. While she dealt with Joanna's darker hair, the other waiting-woman helped Isabella into her long-skirted, tight-waisted dress of deep red cloth, trimmed at the wrists with grey fur and fastened with glittering rows of small golden buttons.

In a niche beside the bed stood a little image of the Virgin Mary with the infant Saviour in her arms, a beautiful image carved by a clever Flemish craftsman. Each princess, when she was dressed, knelt down before it and whispered an *Ave Maria* and the Lord's Prayer in Latin

Meanwhile Lady de la Mote's own waiting-woman had been braiding her hair into two rolls and helping her to exchange her simple gown for a trailing robe of dark Genoa velvet.

Holding Isabella's hand on the right and Joanna's on the left, the governess led her charges down the shadowy stone stairs to the chapel of St John, where every day they attended Mass before breakfast.

In that ancient chapel, built by their ancestor, William the Conqueror, the princesses had their own kneeling-chairs covered with green velvet, and Lady de la Mote had one for herself, with a thicker cushion suited to her age. On bare pews behind them gathered the various members of the household: Peter, Thomas, and William the valets, Gerard de Gay the minstrel, Alys, Maudlyn, and Lady de la Mote's maid, the red-haired Cecily.

Isabella followed the service as well as she could in her prayer-book, turning its parchment leaves with great care, for they were adorned with gold-leaf and lovely little coloured pictures. Joanna was thought still too young to have a book of her own—books were costly, for they had to be written by hand—but she loved to look at the paintings on the walls of the chapel, where there were angels and archangels, saints and apostles, nearly as large as life. These paintings were already a hundred years old, for they had been placed there by King Henry III, but the colours were as gay as ever.

When the short and simple service was over, and Father Hugh the chaplain had withdrawn, followed by little Nicolas—the son of the keeper of the lions, who acted as his acolyte—the princesses returned to their own apartments for breakfast. They ate off silver plates and drank their morning draught of red wine out of cups of silver-gilt. Wheaten bread, grilled fish straight from the Thames, and venison pie formed their repast, and the elder princess ate with a fine appetite. Joanna, on the other hand, had to be coaxed to eat. She was rather a delicate child, and her mother thought she had never quite recovered from the hardships she had undergone two years before. At that time she had been betrothed to a little prince of the Imperial House of Austria, and she was sent to Coblenz, to be brought up among her future subjects. But she had been so shabbily treated and kept so short of everything she needed—even food—that King Edward withdrew his consent to the marriage and brought his hungry and homesick daughter back to her own family.

Joanna seldom spoke of those dreary months in a strange land; but when she was told that instead of remaining with

the king and queen in Flanders she was to be sent to another place, she had wept, thinking that perhaps that place would be Coblenz, and the queen had had much ado to comfort her.

As soon as Peter and William had cleared away the cups and platters, Father Hugh made his appearance—with his hands full of parchments, an ink-horn swinging from a cord on his wrist, and a leather case full of goose-quills tucked in the crook of his elbow. He was a lean man with a kind, wrinkled face; and though he was very learned—he could read and write, and speak both French and Latin—his voice never lost its broad Sussex accent. For the king's chaplain had been born a poor boy, the son of a labourer in a village near the sea. Such boys, if they were clever and diligent, often entered the Church—it was the only way of escape from their dull and narrow lives—and some of them rose to be bishops. Master Hugh had no mind to be a bishop and dwell in a palace of his own and sit in the Parliament at Westminster. He was perfectly content to be where he was, and his contentment gave a peculiar cheerfulness to his face.

"Oh, good Father Hugh, when you have written our letters for us, will you tell us a story?" asked Isabella.

"If there be time, my child. But the Lady de la Mote tells me that you are to go out in your barge to-day and visit some gardens on the other side of the river. So there may not be time. Come, let us begin."

He spread out his parchments, sharpened one of his goose-quills, and began to write, not waiting to ask either princess what she wanted to say, for letters to the king and queen all began and ended in the same solemn, stately, and respectful way. Presently, however, he looked up and said, "Now, what do you wish to tell my lord the king?"

"Pray, good Father," cried the elder princess, "tell him that we are very well. And that we obey the Lady de la Mote in all things. And that the Bishop of Carlisle has sent us two tame hares as a present."

Father Hugh's quill scraped busily, and then he looked up again.

"Also," continued Isabella, eagerly, "that we are very glad we may give a new winter coat to Gerard de Gay, and new shoes to our candle-bearer and our water-carrier. Also that I went on my palfrey all the way to Westminster and back, with Thomas walking beside me and holding the bridle."

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"And you, my child," asked the chaplain, turning to Joanna, when he had finished writing, "what have you to say?"

The little princess meditated for a moment with her chin on her hand. "Pray, Father Hugh, say that I want nothing except to see the king and queen, and my brothers, the Prince of Wales and Prince John, once more."

"Nothing else, my child? These are the words I write on your behalf every time."

"Why," said Isabella, breaking in, "there is still something to say, sister. Let Father Hugh tell the king our father how fast you are growing. Tell how when the tailor brought home your new grey gown with the scarlet sleeves you had already grown so much that he had to make you another in great haste!"

A smile suddenly flickered over Joanna's rather grave little face. "Oh, yes, do tell that to my lord the king. He will be glad, for he used to say that I was too small, and John used to laugh and say that I would never be any bigger than the queen's pet ape."

"There is something more I should like to say," said Isabella. "Tell my lord the king that I pray every day to God and to Our Lady that he may win as great a victory on land as he won this year on the sea.¹ Then we can go to Flanders—or he can come home to England—and we shall be as safe anywhere as we are here."

"That is a good prayer, my child, and every faithful subject of the king is praying with you. But you must remember that he is wise, and that if he thinks it best that you should abide here in his good Tower of London, then best it certainly must be."

Isabella received this reminder with a sigh. The education of a princess began very early in those days; she had to learn when she was little more than a baby that affairs of state always come first, and that her whole life, from the cradle onward, would be planned and shaped with small regard for her own personal wishes. Another part of their training, which both Isabella and Joanna liked far better, was the art of bestowing gifts with royal grace and kindness. Huntsmen, bargemen, messengers, and grooms often received

¹ The naval victory called the Battle of Sluys. It was because Edward III feared that the French might launch a counter-attack by land that he sent his daughters to the Tower for safety.

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

presents of money or clothing on behalf of the princesses whom they served, but the specially faithful and favoured ones received such rewards from the children's own hands, and thus was then felt to be no small honour.

Just as Father Hugh was folding up the parchment, Thomas the valet came to the door and asked to speak with Lady de la Mote. It seemed that a man had come to the Tower bringing a gift for the two princesses from the Countess of Arundel. What were the gifts? Four hounds, with collars hung with little brass bells. Both the small girls were wild with excitement. They had already many pets—dogs, birds, horses, and the tame hares sent by the Bishop of Carlisle—but they felt that it would be quite impossible to have too many. Might they go down to the green plot outside the White Tower and see the new arrivals for themselves? Lady de la Mote said that they might, and that she would come with them.

"And I," said Father Hugh, "I will come also. I should like to speak with this man. He is a man of Sussex, even as I am."

When they reached the place where the hounds were waiting on a leash of scarlet leather, Isabella and Joanna ran as fast as their long dresses would let them. They stroked and petted the graceful, friendly creatures.

"Oh, they are beautiful, and I am sure they are swift-footed. Are they not swift-footed?" Isabella asked the Countess of Arundel's servant.

"Truly, lady, they be as fleet of foot as any hounds ever bred in our part of Sussex," he answered; and the princess noticed at once that his way of speaking was very like Father Hugh's.

"You must give the thanks of the lady Isabella and the lady Joanna to the Countess your mistress," said Lady de la Mote. "And now, Thomas will show you the way to the kennels, and you must have a good meal of beef and ale before you set out again for Sussex."

The man bowed, touching his forehead with the knuckles of his right hand. In his left hand he still held the scarlet leash at which the hounds were straining.

"My son," said Father Hugh. "You come from Arundel. I come from Shoreham, which is not very far from there. Can you tell me if the harvest has been a good one in Sussex this year?"

"Well, Father, it has not been good and it has not been bad. Many of our young men have gone to fight for the king, and some of the crops have been wasted for lack of hands to reap them. But it has been a rare year for apples and cherries, Father."

"Good," said Father Hugh. "I rejoice to hear it, my son"

He watched the man as, after bowing again to Lady de la Mote, the two princesses, and the chaplain himself, he led the hounds away in the direction indicated by Thomas

"Ah," said Father Hugh, "they are good folk, my Sussex folk. Not so numble of wit as the Londoners be, but good, simple folk; good farmers in peace and stout fighters when the king goes to war."

"The king my father says that all the English are good fighters," remarked Isabella.

"The Prince of Wales our brother says that there are none better than the men of Kent," chimed in Joanna.

Father Hugh's thin cheeks flushed a little, and then he laughed. "Ah, my children," said he, "beware lest you lead a priest into the foolishness of crying aloud that his own people are better than the people of the next county! It is fitting that I should remember that they are all God's children and the king's good subjects."

"Well, Father," said Isabella, "for my part I like the people of Peterborough. When I and my brother and my sister went to visit the Abbot of Peterborough, the townsfolk brought us cherries and sweetmeats and scarlet and green cloth to make us new gowns."

"Lady Isabella," remarked her governess, dryly. "You were then only three years old, so you cannot remember much about it. But some who *do* remember say that you were so shy of the Mayor of Peterborough that when he died near to offer you his gift you wept, and tried to hide yourself behind the Abbot. Which was discourteous on your part."

"What did Joanna do?" asked Isabella, hoping to hear that her younger sister had also been lacking in politeness.

"The Lady Joanna slept all the time in the arms of her nurse."

William and Peter, the two other valets of the royal apartments, now came to say that if the ladies desired refreshments before setting out in their barge, they would find these ready in their own room.

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

"Shall we not feed the poor lions to-day?" asked Joanna.

Lady de la Mote glanced up at the sun.

"No, not to-day. It is too late. But the lions will not be forgotten. Nicholas and his father will see to it that they are fed."

"It is a pity," mused Joanna, "that we cannot keep all our beasts together in one big pen, and feed them all with crumbs of cake."

"I should not like to see a lion's face if you gave him crumbs of cake," laughed Isabella.

They themselves were soon enjoying not crumbs but big slices of cake, sweetened with honey and flavoured with chopped-up almonds and rare spices. Joanna, who had to be coaxed to eat fish or venison, needed no coaxing when she was offered this kind of cake. When both the little girls had finished, and the trestle-table, with its cover of fine Flemish linen, had been folded up and put away, Isabella went over to the window—which was not made to open—and peeped down through the latticed panes.

It was a delightful day, and the Thames was glittering in the sunlight. Boats, with their sails furled, were lying moored alongside the wharf to the west of the Tower. Other boats, large and small, some with sails, some with oars, were moving up and down the river. To her right the princess could catch a glimpse of London Bridge, that wonderful bridge, with houses built all the way across and a beautiful little chapel in the centre, which Londoners regarded as one of the marvels of the world. So narrow was the space between each of its massy piers that a good deal of skill was needed to get any vessel safely through, and when the tide was high, or the Thames was in flood, it was an exciting as well as a difficult thing to do.

All the way from the Tower to the Abbey and the royal palace at Westminster the northern bank of the river was an almost unbroken line of great, stately buildings, castles with strong, grey towers rising straight out of the water, or noble houses and halls belonging to rich merchants and trading-guilds of London. Inland crowded the narrow, crooked streets, and the spires and belfries of the numberless churches which graced the ancient and famous City.

Joanna joined her elder sister at the window.

"Look," said she, "the barge is waiting for us. I hope Gerard de Gay is coming too."

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"When are we to give Gerard his new coat, my lady?" asked Isabella, turning to Lady de la Mote.

"As soon as the tailor has finished making it."

"I hope," said Joanna, who was a kind-hearted child, "that the tailor will not be slow about it. There may be cold days soon, and Gerard de Gay does not like the cold."

"No; because he comes from Plovence, where the air is warm, and red roses grow all the year round."

"Do they truly, sister?"

"So Gerard always says. You have heard him say it."

"I thought maybe it was a fairy-tale. Like his story of the dreadful dragon called the Tarasque."

"Dragons are not fairy-tales," said Isabella, in a rather shocked voice. "They are real. How could St George have killed one, or St Martha, or St Margaret, if they had not been real dragons?"

"But there aren't any nowadays," argued Joanna.

"Not in England. And I don't think there are any in Flanders or in France. But in the far-off lands, where the spices and the silken stuffs and the pearls come from—the lands called Ind and Cathay—there are very strange, terrible beasts; and I am sure some of them may be dragons."

Lady de la Mote interrupted this serious discussion by telling the princesses that it was time to go.

"Is Gerard de Gay coming with us?" asked Joanna.

"Yes. He is coming."

"May we bring our hares?"

The lady considered the idea gravely.

"No; better not. They might get frightened and escape, and then they would be hunted by dogs and men. Leave them in their hutch. They are quite happy, and they would tell you so if they could speak."

When Alys and Maudlyn had wrapped the two little girls up in their blue velvet mantles—each with the royal shields of England embroidered round the hem—they went down, hand-in-hand, to the place where their own barge was rocking in the water at the foot of a flight of broad stone steps.

Eight sturdy oarsmen, wearing tunics of scarlet cloth, sat in the barge ready to send it along with strong, steady strokes of the oar. John, their captain, who had a gilt-bronze chain round his neck to show his rank, sat in the stern to steer. In the centre of the barge were cushioned chairs for Lady de la Mote

and the princesses, and two wooden benches for any attendants who might come with them. A sort of tent or canopy of thick, brightly coloured silk could be rigged up over these chairs if necessary, but the late September sunshine was so warm that Lady de la Mote decided that no shelter was required.

After they were settled in their places, and when the rowers were just going to bend to their oars, a cry went up, "Where is Gerard de Gay?"

"We cannot go without Gerard de Gay," said the princesses firmly. "Someone must fetch him."

But at that moment a man was seen to dart out from beneath the arched water-gate and come hopping and scrambling down the steps, clutching a long-necked fiddle under one arm, and the bow belonging to it under the other.

"Gerard!" cried Isabella. "We thought you had forgotten that you were coming with us!"

Very much out of breath, the minstrel clambered aboard, bowed low, and seated himself on the bench with his fiddle across his knee.

"I—ask—pardon," he panted. "A string broke—as I—was—making—ready—to—come."

At a sign from Lady de la Mote John gave the word to his eight men, and sixteen red-painted oars were dipped into the water with one big splash. Two swans which had been swimming near the Tower Wharf turned peevish faces towards the barge and removed themselves out of its path as quickly as their dignity would permit.

"Where are we going, my lady?" asked Joanna, who had not paid much attention to Father Hugh's remarks on the subject.

"To some fair gardens on the other side of the river. They belong to certain merchants of London, who have planted them for their good pleasure."

Gerard de Gay had now got his breath back and had begun to tune his fiddle, well knowing that it would not be long before his young mistresses commanded him to sing and play to them. The minstrel was a small, wiry man, dark-eyed and swarthy-skinned. The green hood pulled over his head hid his hair, all but one wandering lock, which was grey.

Both the princesses were very fond of Gerard de Gay, whose store of songs and tales seemed everlasting. They

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knew that he had come from Provence—the joyous native land of their own music-loving ancestress, Queen Eleanor, the wife of that King Henry III who had adorned the chapel in the Tower with the big, bright paintings which Joanna loved to look at. They knew, too, that he had always a joke on his lips, and often a smile on his face. But they did not know that in this grey England of theirs he was homesick for his golden Provençal valley, and that, among his English companions, he was a lonely and sometimes a melancholy man. He could speak no English; and what little French they spoke he could hardly understand. Luckily for him, the princesses and their governess never used any other language than French when they talked to him. It was still the tongue chiefly spoken at court, and the upper classes had not yet realized that English could be as rich and as graceful a speech as any in the world.

John and the bargemen could not help wishing that Gerard would sometimes sing so that they could understand, as many of his little songs made the princesses laugh. But the merry tunes were something that they could all enjoy, and the oars kept time to the scraping of the fiddle.

Many of Gerard's songs were about the joys of spring. Some were about knights and ladies, battles and tournaments; some were about giants and dragons. Most of them he had learned in his youth, but several he had made up himself. He liked to describe the dreadful creature called the Tarasque which was believed to have lived once on the banks of the Rhône. Every time that Gerard sang a lay about the Tarasque its claws were longer, its teeth were sharper, its eyes were redder, and its scales were thicker, than the time before.



MINSTREL OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

Princess Joanna, who was rather a timid child, always felt glad when that part of the story came telling how St Martha had overcome the terrible beast. But Isabella liked hearing about the beast itself.

To-day, as the barge moved upstream with the tide, Gerard trotted out the Tarasque again, and never had it sounded more fearsome.

"Gerard," said Joanna, when he stopped, "are you quite sure that St Martha really *did* kill it—really quite dead?"

The minstrel pretended to be very much astonished.

"But my lady princess, of course she did! There is a church on the very spot where she did it. Have I not seen it with my own eyes?"

"You don't think the Tarasque had any children, do you, Gerard?" asked Joanna.

Gerard reflected.

"Who can say? Dragons lay eggs. And out of eggs come little dragons."

"A little dragon would be a merry sight," said Isabella. "I wish I could have a little dragon for a pet, a little green one, with bright yellow eyes."

"I wish," remarked Joanna, "that Gerard would sing a song about a baby dragon."

"My lady princess, you shall be obeyed. Hearken. Once upon a time there was a minstrel. He lived in my own land, near the fair city of Beaucaire. It was a long time ago, you understand. They had not then built St Martha's church on the place where she slew the Tarasque. You could still see the marks made by the beast's huge claws—and the black stain of fire, where the flames had come out of his nostrils."

"Ah!" breathed Isabella, delightedly.

"One day this minstrel went for a walk on the bank of the river Rhône. He had his fiddle slung over his shoulder, and he was thinking of a new song which he wished to make. And, my lady princesses, when a minstrel is thinking of a new song he can't think of anything else—not even of his dinner."

"Did the poor minstrel get no dinner that day?"

Gerard shook his head.

"My lady Joanna, you shall hear how he himself might have *become* a dinner—for a dragon."

The royal barge was just passing beneath London Bridge, and in spite of the skill of John and his men it pitched and

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swayed so violently that the minstrel had to pause till they were safely through. Then he went on.

"It was near sunset when he reached a lonely part of the country, where there were cliffs and caves, shadowed by dark woods. And suddenly he heard a strange sound."

"A dragon's roar!" cried Isabella.

"No, my lady princess. A dragon's snore."

Isabella laughed at the idea, but Joanna drew a little nearer to Lady de la Mote.

"The minstrel," continued Gerard, "gazed all about him and could see nothing. Then, following the direction from which the strange sound seemed to come, he saw a cave in the cliff-side—and inside was a small dragon, not quite asleep, but looking very drowsy."

"Oh, what *did* he do?"

"At first he made a movement as if to run away. But the dragon half opened one eye, and a little jet of flame came out of its nose. So the minstrel decided that he had better sing it a lullaby, and this is what he sang:

"Sleep, little dragon, fold your wing
And clasp your scaly paws,
Breathe out no red flame while I sing,
And bare no cruel claws,
Of dreadful things no doubt you dream,
With snorings loud and deep;
Sleep, little dragon—for you seem
Much handsomer asleep.

Sleep, little dragon, in your cave
Beside the tawny Rhône,
Sleep—for I am not very brave
And I am all alone,
If you should open but one eye
Away I soon would leap,
So, if you like this lullaby,
Little dragon, sleep!"

"That is a *beautiful* song!" said Isabella, clasping her hands.

"Did the baby dragon go on sleeping?" asked Joanna.

"Surely, my lady princess. Or else the minstrel would never have got home alive to tell the story to my great-grandfather—and sing him the song."

"What would have happened if the dragon had wakened up?"

"It would have eaten the minstrel!"

"And his fiddle, too?"

"That I cannot tell. The fiddle might have given the dragon a very bad pain."

"I wish," said Isabella, "that the dragon had eaten the fiddle without eating the minstrel."

"Alack, my lady, what would the poor man have done without his fiddle?"

Isabella nodded. She knew that minstrels often had great difficulty in gaining their daily bread, even when they had got fiddles, harps, pipes, or dulcimers.

The barge by this time was half-way to Westminster, and John was steering towards the Surrey shore. They had left behind them the grey tower of St Mary Overie at Southwark, and there was little to be seen on the south bank of the river but flat meadows tufted with willow-trees.

"Where is this garden, good John?" Lady de la Mote asked the captain of the barge.

"Round the next bend, my lady. There is a shelving bank of gravel, with wooden poles for mooring boats."

"No steps where we shall land?"

"No, my lady, none. But my men and I can carry your ladyship and the lady princesses."

"So be it. Ah, now I can see what looks like a garden yonder."

"That is the place, my lady."

A moment later the barge grounded. John sprang out first, and, lifting Isabella in his arms, set her safely on the shore. Then he took Joanna, who gave one faint scream as she was swung over the reedy ripples. Two of the rowers made a sort of dandy-chair for Lady de la Mote, who kept an air of the utmost dignity as they bore her up the short slope.

"Oh," cried Isabella, "Gerard de Gay has been left behind!"

And indeed the minstrel was standing up in the barge, with his fiddle and his bow under his arm, looking with very doubtful eyes at the stretch of muddy water, four feet wide and two feet deep, which separated him from his royal mistresses.

"Jump, Gerard!" called the two princesses.

But Gerard did not seem to want to jump.

"I think," said the governess, "that Gerard is afraid of dropping his fiddle in the Thames if he should jump."

THE PRINCESSES IN THE TOWER

"Shall I take Master Gerard's fiddle, my lady?" suggested John, helpfully.

Lady de la Mote translated the suggestion into French for Gerard's benefit, and, with a smile and a quick, muttered word of thanks, the minstrel allowed the stalwart John to carry his property to land.

"*Now* jump, Gerard!"

This time Gerard could hardly refuse. So jump he did, as vigorously as he could, but he must have been nervous, or perhaps he was not as nimble as he had once been, for he stumbled, and fell on his hands and knees, and the long, drooping sleeves of his black-and-crimson coat were soaked in muddy water.

"Alack, my lady princesses," said he, as he scrambled ashore. "Time was when I could have turned a somersault from yonder barge to this place where we now stand, but your minstrel grows old!"

The obliging John was soon wringing the water out of the minstrel's sleeves.

"Do not grieve, Gerard," said Isabella, kindly. "You shall have a new coat soon—a warm one, against the winter."

"Could you not turn some somersaults *now*?" hinted Joanna. "Then your sleeves would dry the quicker."

The unfortunate minstrel shot an appealing glance at Lady de la Mote, and she came to his rescue.

"Nay, my lady Joanna," she said. "The sun and the wind will do well enough. Come now, and let us walk in the garden. It is a pleasant place, and in the spring those roses and hawthorns must be very gay."

It was indeed a pleasant place, though not a single flower was in bloom. Paved paths crossed the smooth green turf, and there were many different kinds of trees, of which a large number were fruit-trees. Everything was very neat and trim, but that is just what people admired in a fourteenth-century garden. John, who had taken upon himself the duties of guide, informed the princesses that the strawberries and cherries which grew there were quite famous for their size and sweetness, and that the rose-arbour was one of the finest for miles around. In the centre, where two paths met and crossed, was a square pond, paved and edged with pale grey stone; and, peering down into the dim, green water, the princesses could see several large, dark-coloured fishes moving

to and fro in a lazy manner, or lying sulkily still on the bottom.

"These be royal carp, my lady princesses," explained John. "They came from the fish-ponds of my lord the king your grandfather."

"Our grandfather!" cried the two little girls in one breath.

"The same, my ladies."

"Can fishes live to be so very, very old?" asked Joanna, nearly tumbling into the pond in her eagerness to have a better view.

"Surely, my lady. These were not young when they were brought hither."

"They are not pretty," remarked Isabella. "Not like the little silver dolphins embroidered on my blue gown. Why do we never see dolphins in any pond?"

"Dolphins they be salt-water fishes, so please you, my lady; and they are large beasts—too large for such a pond as this."

"Oh," said Isabella, disappointed. "I thought they were quite small, and silver all over."

"I saw a dead one once, down at the wharf called Billingsgate where the fishermen unload their ships—but it was of a dark, ugly colour. If ever it had been silver-coloured, there was no silver about it when I saw it."

"But there *are* golden fishes, are there not?" asked Isabella.

"Your ladyship means the fish called the John Dory. It is not bright gold; not like the king's crown. But its scales are of a kind of goldenish colour. It is good to eat, too."

"And these in the pond here—are they also good to eat?"

"So I am told, my lady. But no such royal fish has ever swum on to my platter."

"If only they could talk to us," said Isabella, "they could tell us about the king our grandfather—he who had the very long legs and went to fight in the Holy Land."

"I have heard of talking birds—starlings and ravens and such, but never of a talking fish, my lady. None the less, if your ladyship had a mind to it, I have no doubt that you could have some carp of your own. They will come to the side of the pond at feeding-time if they are called."

"I do not like the look of them much," said Isabella. "They have cross, cruel faces. I would rather have Gerard de Gay's baby dragon for a pet."

Lady de la Mote now felt that it was time to return to the

THE PRINCESSES IN THE TOWER

Tower. There was a slight chill in the air, and clouds were passing across the brightness of the sun.

"Come, my ladies," she said. "Let us go back to the barge."

"Perhaps we may come to this garden again some day," suggested Joanna, "when the roses are in bloom."

"Ah," sighed Gerard de Gay, drawing his coat round his lean shoulders, "when the roses are in bloom—that is a happy season!"

On their way home the princesses were carried more swiftly, and with fewer bumps as their barge passed under London Bridge, both the flow of the river and the receding tide being with them. As John was tying the mooring-ropes to the Tower Wharf, Lady de la Mote slipped six silver coins into the hand of each princess, with a whispered word of advice. Isabella and Joanna nodded. They knew what they had to do, and they liked doing it. When they were safely ashore, the elder princess spoke to the captain of the barge.

"Good John, we thank you, the princess my sister and I, for rowing us across the river and leading us into that fair garden. These silver shillings are a gift from us to you and your men."

Joanna said nothing, but she smiled kindly at John as she slipped her half of the gift into his broad hand.

"Now may God, and Our Lady, and all the saints in heaven bless and keep your ladyships!" cried John, heartily. And the red-coated rowers, still seated at their oars, sent up a cordial "Amen."

When the little girls reached their own apartments they found a log fire crackling in the big open fireplace of their room and supper already on the table.

"Oh," said Isabella, well pleased, "the cook has made some blancmange for us!"

The dish to which the royal cook gave that name was not a sweet or a pudding, but a mixture of rice, milk-of-almonds, hens' livers, saffron, and spice. The children had spoons and knives with which to eat, but no forks. The left hand was always used to hold such foods as mutton chops, wings of birds, and ribs of beef. To have used the right hand for anything but cutting or carving would have been considered very ill-bred. All these things the princesses had learned from babyhood; and also to wipe their lips with their table-napkins

before drinking, and not to dip their fingers too deep into the sauce.

In vain after supper did they beg leave for one game of chess before going to bed. Lady de la Mote said no. So Alys and Maudlyn unbraided the hair of the little girls, unbuttoned their long gowns, and, sitting them on two high-backed oaken chairs before the fire, pulled off their scarlet stockings.

"It has been a happy day," said Isabella.

"But an idle one," her governess reminded her. "Not one stitch of embroidery has been done. To-morrow you must make amends. The queen has sent you some silken threads of many colours. Now say your prayers, my ladies. Commend your souls to God. And pray for the king and the queen, and the whole realm of England."

Half an hour later the torches in the iron cressets on the wall had been quenched, and the floating wick had been lit that was to burn all night. The dark blue bed-curtains with the golden leopards had been drawn, and, on their green silk pillows, the two small daughters of King Edward III of England were fast asleep.

IX

THE 'WEEPING LADY'

A.D. 1449

I AM sorry," said Alain the page, "I am very sorry that this is the last day of the jousting."
"And I, too," agreed his fellow page, Olivier, "but it is not yet time to get up."

The two boys, one eleven and the other twelve years old, belonged to the household of Duke Philip of Burgundy, that prince who was as wealthy and powerful as many of the kings who sought his friendship. Tournaments were the favourite sport of his knights and nobles, and though he himself was now too elderly and gouty to ride into the lists, his only son, Charles, Count of Charolais, took his place with great delight. Alain and Olivier looked forward eagerly to the time when they, too, should don armour and mount large, sturdy horses and break lances, while the heralds in their gorgeous tabards counted the hits. But for the time being, as they were not yet esquires, much less knights, the most they could do was to haunt the tents, the pavilions, the stables, the armourers' workshops, and the fenced and sanded jousting-ground, as often as their duties left them time to do so.

Upon two pallets, stretched on the matted floor of their turret room, the boys lay side by side. They did not go to rest very early on any evening during one of these week-long festivals, for they had to help to wait upon the duke their master and his guests at the banquets which were held every night. Olivier found it difficult to keep awake as the flaring torches burned down in their iron sockets; but Alain, who was a livelier child, saw so much to interest him that he was almost sorry when the word was given to retire. It was Alain, too, who was always alert and ready to leap up from his pallet in the morning, and Olivier who turned over on his side, murmuring that it was too soon to stir.

Just as he uttered his favourite refrain, the door of the tiny

room opened, and Jacques de Charny, the esquire who had chief charge of them, poked his head in.

"Pages—children—dormice—owls," was his greeting "Do you want to drowse all day? Up—and remember to clean your nails when you wash your hands."

His head, with its thick fringe of fair hair cut level with the ears, disappeared, the door clanged on its heavy iron hinges, and Olivier, yawning, decided that it was indeed time to rise. Alain was already up and pulling on his hose of fine green wool which reached from his feet to his waist. Over this



MEDIEVAL BATH TUB

he slipped a tunic of a gay blue colour and a black leather girdle clasped with gilded bronze. The pages, like the esquires, the knights, and the duke himself, took baths every ten days or so in deep wooden tubs screened by small white tents, but it was rather a lengthy business and not to be undertaken when time pressed. Hands, face, and teeth were washed in a bowl of blue-and-grey earthenware, and a carved wooden comb was passed through the hair. The page

was then ready for his breakfast.

"Make haste, Olivier," said Alain, as he clasped his girdle. "We have much to do to-day. And I have more still to do to-night."

"Well, for my part," muttered Olivier, as he in turn began to dress, "I am glad I never went to school, for I have no wish to be disguised as a 'Weeping Lady,' and to recite verses before the duke and all his company."

"You need not brag because you have never been to school," retorted Alain. "It is nothing to be proud of. I liked going to school. The priest who taught us told us many noble tales of the ancient Romans. Julius Cæsar was a scholar as well as a conqueror—he went to school."

"I do not give two dried peas for Julius Cæsar. I am sure St George never went to school. Or Hercules."

"Well, then, you are wrong—about Hercules, anyhow. He *did* go to school. With the Centaurs, who were half-men and half-horses."

"I would go gladly to such a school—think how well one could learn to ride! Did your schoolmaster tell you

if there were such creatures anywhere in the world to-day?"

"Nay, there are none. Come, now, Olivier—have a care—you will break the comb in two if you tug so at your hair."

"It is easy for you—your hair is straight. I wish I were bald—like Duke Philip."

At this idea Alain burst out laughing.

"A bald page—there is a merry notion! Why, you would look like one of those little demons carved on the pinnacles of the great abbey at Ghent."

Both boys, having knelt to say their prayers before the wooden crucifix that hung on the oak-wainscoted wall, went down the twisting turret-stair and joined their fellow-pages in the great hall of the castle. There were some twelve in all, belonging either to the ducal retinue or to the household of some knight who had come to take part in the jousting. Their ages ranged from nine to fifteen, and they came from various parts of the duke's dominions; one dark youth hailed from the marshy land of Brabant, Alain was a native of Bruges, in the flat Flemish lowlands; Olivier's family had held estates for many years on the wooded shores of the river Sambre, in Hainault.

As they ate their breakfast of wheaten bread, venison pie, and eels stewed in wine the pages prattled merrily of many things—mainly the tournament which was to come to an end that day, after a week of much excitement.

"For my part," the dark Brabanter was saying, "if some day I should hold a *pas*, I would set up a shield or a helm, or an image of a great warrior to defend—not a 'Weeping Lady.'"

One very small, shy, freckled page from Franche Comté, who had only recently come to court, whispered to Alain, "I pray you, tell me what is a *pas*, of which they speak so much here? Is it another name for a tournament?"

"No, not exactly. It is a sort of undertaking—an enterprise."

The small page still seemed puzzled.

"What do they do, who hold a *pas*?"

Alain was delighted to explain.

"Look you, if a knight wishes to hold a *pas*, he gathers together some other knights and esquires, and they set up in some place a shield, or an image, or a fountain, or a pillar,

which on a certain day they will defend in the lists against any challenger."

"But supposing no challenger should come?"

Alain smiled pityingly.

"Challengers always come. The *pas* is proclaimed long before the jousting begins. Heralds carry messages far and wide."

"I should like to be a herald," said the small page, whose name was Laurent, "and wear a tabard with gay coats-of-arms embroidered on it and blow a trumpet when the jousting begins and mark all the hits."

"I would rather score the hits myself," said Alain, stoutly.

"Who speaks of scoring hits?"

The boy looked round with a start. He had not noticed that Jacques de Charny had entered the hall and was now standing behind him.

"I think," continued the esquire, with a twinkle in his eye, "that a warrior who desires to score hits should learn to make them. You and Olivier will practise at the quintain, in the well-court, after breakfast."

Alain's face fell.

"I had thought we might go to the lists," said he. "They are fighting with axes to-day."

"You can go after you have hit the quintain six times out of ten. Old Michel will give you your horse and count your hits."

"I pray you," pleaded Alain, catching at de Charny's long, grass-green sleeve as he moved away. "May I take this new page—this one beside me—to see the 'Weeping Lady'? To-morrow the image will be carried away, and all the shields."

"You may. Unless my lord the duke has need of you to attend on him."

De Charny walked away, the rushes with which the hall was strewn rustling under his feet, and Laurent began to stammer forth his thanks.

"You have not ridden at the quintain yet, have you?" asked Alain, waving these aside.

"No, not yet. I am too small," confessed the freckled child, hanging his head.

"Well, then, it will be good for you to watch Olivier and me. Can you count up to ten?"

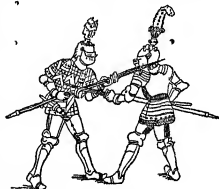
"Up to a hundred—and more."

THE 'WEEPING LADY'

"You shall count the hits then—and old Michel will not be able to cheat and keep us longer at our task than is due."

Leaving the lofty hall, with its high, dark-beamed roof and its tapestry hangings woven with scenes from the adventures of Jason in quest of the Golden Fleece, the three boys betook themselves to that part of the castle called the well-court. At one end was the stone-rimmed well from which the chief water-supply was drawn, and at the other stood an upright pole to which was

fixed a wooden shield, so made that at a touch it would swing round on a pivot. Michel was waiting for them, a surly, wunkled, bandy-legged old man who had been an archer in the army of Duke Philip's father, John the Fearless. By its bridle he held the sturdy Flemish horse upon which Alain and Olivier,



SINGLE COMBAT

turn about, were to gallop forward as they tried to hit the swinging shield with their long, light lances.

"Why have you brought this little sir?" asked Michel, pointing a knotted forefinger at Laurent. "He cannot bestride Hector—he could not so much as hold this lance, much less strike the quintain with it."

Laurent looked abashed at this, but Alain pointed out that he had brought the "little sir" merely to watch him and Olivier.

Alain, being three months older than Olivier, insisted on running the first tilt. He vaulted lightly upon the broad saddle of Hector, gathered up the reins in his left hand, tucked the handle of the lance firmly under his right elbow, and dug in his heels. Hector lumbered forward at a thumping gallop, and his rider aimed—as he thought—truly and well at the centre of the shield, but the lance-tip merely glanced off the edge, and the shield, instead of spinning back on its pivot, gave only a feeble waggle.

"Miss," growled Michel, making a long furrow with his finger in the mud by the well-head.

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

Feeling foolish, Alain cantered back to the starting-point and once more sent the patient Hector at a gallop. This time he did better. The shield gave forth a loud bang as he hit it full in the centre, and the iron pivot squeaked as it swung back.

"One," growled Michel, making a second furrow, shorter than the first. "One miss, one hit."

"Is that how he keeps the score?" whispered Laurent to Olivier.

"Yes—in the dust if there be no mud. At one time he kept it by memory, but there were so many disputes that it was agreed he should make long or short marks as you have seen."

To his great joy Alain did succeed in hitting the quintain six times out of ten, but Olivier was less fortunate, and scored only thrice. Or so Michel said, pointing to his record. But Laurent, who had been counting under his breath, thought that he was wrong, and that Olivier had hit the shield four times. For one bold moment he even thought of saying so. But a glance at the old archer's stern face deterred him. There was a look of authority about it, and a sullen, scowling air that might well have daunted a stouter heart than his. He was quite surprised to see that face soften into something like a smile as he patted Hector's neck before leading the horse away for the duke's grooms to unsaddle him.

"Now," said Alain to the little freckled page, "come with me. You have not seen the 'Weeping Lady,' have you?"

"No. But I know that this tournament is held in her honour. Is she—is she a *real* lady?"

"You shall see."

Laurent seemed mildly alarmed at the idea that the 'Weeping Lady' might be real. He followed Alain to the camp of tents and pavilions pitched in a large field a little beyond the ramparts of the castle, and admired the beautiful colours—for the arms of the various knights taking part in the *pas* were painted on the linen of their tents as well as on the shields hanging outside them. From the pavilions brilliant banners were floating on flag-staffs tipped with what looked like apples of gold.

From the direction of the armourers' shed came a clang of iron on steel as the breastplates, helmets, and body-armour of the knights were furbished up for the combats of the day, and a smell of singed hoof as well as the clink of the blacksmith's hammer announced that some of the chargers were being

THE 'WEEPING LADY'

re-shod. Three men were bunging up a big barrel of dry, clean sand on a wheeled cart, and a third walked beside it, carrying the metal scoop from which it was to be scattered in the lists. They disappeared through the opening at one end of the lists, while from the other came three more men carrying among them, with some difficulty, a long, low screen of wood, over which was stretched thick tapestry. This screen was about twenty feet long and four feet high, and it had three flat wooden feet to enable it to stand up firmly if desired.

"Is that the *toile*?" asked Laurent, curiously.

"Of course it is. I heard the duke say one day that formerly they stretched a piece of rope along the centre of the lists to keep mounted combatants from crashing against each other face-to-face; and then they hung a length of arras-cloth upon it, and then—as now—they made a strong screen."

"I have seen a combat between knights on horseback," said the small page, proudly. "Yesterday it was. They were a brave sight, with their plumes on their helmets and the horses' housings of many colours."

"That must have been the fight between the Spanish knight and the Flemish one. They scored the same number of hits with the lance, and the duke made them shake hands when it was over."

The two boys had now left the lists behind them and had reached an open, grassy space, much trodden by the feet of men and the hoofs of horses. At the farther end was pitched a tent of purple-and-white silk, hung with twelve shields, each bearing a different coat-of-arms. At one side of this tent were three large objects at which Laurent gazed with open-mouthed wonder. Two were made of wood, and one of stone; all were painted in the gayest of colours.

The first was the image of a unicorn, as big as a horse. Its horn, mane, tail, and hoofs were gilded; its coat was white. The second was the image of a lady, life-size, wearing a long, blue robe. On her head was the sort of head-dress which the Duchess of Burgundy and her ladies then loved to wear; a framework of cloth of gold, rising to a peak at either side of the forehead, and draped with a flowing veil. From the eyes of this figure flowed a stream of painted tears, the silver paint glittering in the sun, and it was made to appear as if these tears dropped into the basin of the stone fountain which was the third of the three things Alain had brought Laurent to see. In

the centre of the fountain was a carved pillar, surmounted by a statue of the Virgin Mary, at the sight of which the small boy, imitating his companion, hastily pulled off his close-fitting, black velvet cap.

"Look, Laurent," said Alain. "This is the 'Weeping Lady.' Yonder are the shields of the knights and esquires who have vowed to defend her. When the tournament ends to-day, the two images of wood will be taken to the church at Dijon and placed in one of the side-chapels; the fountain will be set up in the village belonging to the knight who is the captain of the rest."

The flap of the tent was drawn back, and a man who was wearing a herald's tunic embroidered with unicorns and crescent-moons, stepped out.

"Ah, you pages," said he. "you are everywhere! How can I count up the hits in my book if you come prattling and prancing here?"

"I am sorry, Loyal," returned Alain, giving him his correct title as herald. "I only wanted to show the 'Weeping Lady' to my fellow here. He is a new page and has never seen such things as these before."

Loyal's frown faded.

"By Our Lady, that is well done! Come into the tent, both of you."

Inside was a sort of desk, with inkhorn and quills, on which lay open a large book, bound in crimson leather, each of its parchment pages adorned with coloured shields. Loyal explained that in it were the rules and conditions of the *pas* of the 'Weeping Lady,' and that it also contained the final record of all the hits scored, and would the next day also contain the names of those who had borne away the prize in each class—on foot with the axe, on foot with the sword, on horseback with the lance.

"And therewith," he added, smiling, "the name of him who gets the bracelet."

"The bracelet, Loyal?"

For answer the herald pointed to one of the rules written in the book:

Rule 4. Whoever is thrown down upon the ground shall for one year wear a golden bracelet closed with a key, not to be opened but by the lady who holds the key and to whom he shall present the bracelet.

THE 'WEEPING LADY'

"Troth, I would not gladly wear such a bracelet upon my wrist," said Alain.

"It is naught, child. Many a valiant knight has been overthrown in the lists. It is no shame if his victor be likewise valiant. Now, if you wish to see the fight between Messire Jacques de Lalain and Messire Claude Piétois, you had better go. It is time that I was in my place, too."

The boys bowed politely to Loyal and then scampered off as fast as they could run. •

The stands for the spectators were now fast filling up. Duke Philip of Burgundy was just clambering into the judge's seat when the pages reached the enclosure. Behind him stood his own chief herald, the King-at-Arms of the Golden Fleece, and in the high-backed chair next his own his son, the red-haired young Count of Charolais, was waiting to seat himself. The duke, the count, and many of the knights of their retinue wore the collar of that order of knighthood which Philip himself had founded.

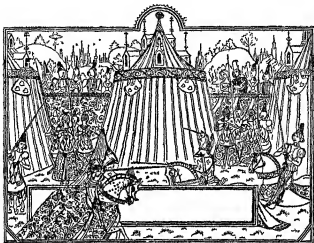
The herald was whispering now in the duke's ear, and Philip's eyebrows went up in surprise. The pages heard him say, "But according to the rules there should be forty-one strokes given and received, neither more nor less. Why does Piétois demand that they should fight until either he or de Lalain is disarmed and overthrown? Tell him it cannot be. It is no matter that the defender is willing. The rules of the *pas* must not be broken."

Another herald departed to give this message to the challenger, while his comrade handed to Duke Philip the white-enamelled wand which was the sign of the judge's office. A moment later a flourish of silver trumpets proclaimed that challenger and defender were about to enter the lists.

During this brief pause, both pages were taking a good look at their lord and master, the Duke of Burgundy. He was then fifty-three years of age, which in the fifteenth century was considered rather more than elderly and not far from old. Nobody could have called him handsome, for he had a long nose, a thick, drooping mouth, and heavy-lidded, close-set eyes. None the less, there was a look of dignity and kindness about his face, and when he smiled it became suddenly pleasant.

Unlike his neighbour, the dull and shabby King Charles VII of France, this prince loved splendour and magnificence. On

this particular occasion he wore a head-dress of a sort of turban shape of vivid poppy-red silk, with a long peak hanging down over one shoulder. His tunic, open in front to show his shirt of delicate, honey-coloured silk, was of black velvet, its pleated skirt falling beneath a girdle of gilt-bronze enamelled in scarlet, white, and black. His long hose, which showed the extreme thinness of his legs, were scarlet; and his peaked



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black shoes were clasped at the ankle with gold-tipped scarlet tags. At his feet lay curled up one of his favourite greyhounds.

There was nothing which Duke Philip enjoyed better than to act as judge in such a combat as the one which was now going to begin. As the two knights marched in he leaned forward, turning first to one side and then to the other, noticing every detail of their armour and equipment. Chain mail, such as the Crusaders had worn, had now given way to plate armour, consisting of overlapping or interlocking plates of burnished steel. These enclosed the whole body in a metal sheath which during the summer was hot and heavy to wear. Their helmets, each adorned with a plume of feathers, had the pierced steel visors down, hiding the face; and the embroidered tunics or surcoats bore the arms of their respective wearers.

De Lalain was the taller and slighter of the two. At his end of the lists was a throng of knights and esquires, unhelmeted but wearing their breastplates and surcoats. They were the competitors who had already fought with him in the course of the tournament.

After one or two blows had been exchanged between the fighters, the struggle became more like a wrestling-match. Each clinging to the axe of the other, they swayed to and fro, trampling deep furrows in the sand, and breathing so hard behind their visors that the onlookers could hear the sound above the clanking of their armour. Then they came to closer grips and were locked together.

"How much longer will this go on?" whispered Laurent to Alain.

"Until one or the other is overthrown."

"But what about the forty-one strokes?"

"Strokes cannot be scored after a man is overthrown, unless by leave of the judge. But I never saw so strange a fight as this. Look! Messire Jacques is holding the head of Piétois under his arm as a bag-piper holds his pipes!"

It was indeed a very odd sight to see Jacques de Lalain tugging and hauling at his opponent's helmet, which was wedged between his steel elbow-guard and the side of his breastplate. The young Charles, Count of Charolais, seemed to find it decidedly comical, for he burst out laughing. Duke Philip, though he bit his lip, did not laugh, for he regarded the rules of knightly combat and the happenings in the lists as matters too high, noble, and serious for laughter.

"I should not like to be in the place of Messire Claude Piétois," said Alain, feelingly.

"No! I," agreed Olivier, who had now joined him in the space reserved for the duke's pages.

"Look how tightly Piétois is still clinging to the handle of Messire Jacques' weapon," said the Brabanter. "The heralds will have some ado to get them asunder."

De Lalain, perhaps growing impatient, now wrenched Piétois sideways with such force that they both fell down together, Piétois flat on his back and de Lalain sprawling half across him and half on the sand.

"This," said Duke Philip, "has gone on long enough. Heralds, part the combatants."

He flung his white wand into the lists as a signal that the

fight was over, and two heralds hastened to help the knights, still locked together, to rise to their feet. Both were much out of breath, and when they pushed up the visors of their helmets it was seen that while de Lalain's face was pale and dabbled with sweat the face of Piétois was flushed deep crimson. They were led to the judge's platform, and the duke bade them shake hands.

"I am willing," said de Lalain, pulling off his steel glove. "He shall have my hand—and the bracelet also!"

At these words the cheeks of Piétois flushed an even deeper red.

"What talk is this of bracelets?" he cried. "You fell down even as I did—and either both—or neither—of us twain should wear one."

"That is not well said," frowned the duke. "Let the heralds decide. They are the judges in such things as these. Do you shake hands, valiant knights, without more jangling."

Piétois drew off his gauntlet and held out his hand.

"As my lord duke pleases," said he. "If I am vanquished, at least my victor is one of the noblest men in Burgundy, and one of the most skilful fighters."

"Look, Laurent, they are shaking hands now," whispered Alain, enjoying his rôle of instructor.

"What next?" whispered back Laurent, who had become pale with excitement under his freckles.

"The trumpets will be blown—and then the duke, and his son, and all the knights in his company will withdraw to the castle. After that the tents will be furled and the pavilions taken down. To-morrow the duke will hand the prizes—they are tall goblets of silver-gilt—to the victors, and the unicorn and the 'Weeping Lady' and the fountain will be carried away. The *par* is over."

"I am hungry," remarked Olivier, looking round for de Charny.

"There will be beef, and venison pie, and marzipan for us in the outer hall," said Alain. "Let us go."

"Before de Charny gives the word?"

"Alack, I had forgot—nay, there he is yonder, waving to us to come."

With a half-regretful glance at all the heraldic splendour which would so soon be a thing of the past, Alain went off

with his two friends, and, under the eye of de Charny, they trooped into the outer hall of the castle.

"The duke and the count eat in their own apartments," explained the esquire, "and the great hall is being made ready for to-night's banquet. Can you not hear hammering and clattering yonder?"

The boys pricked up their ears, and they could.

"Is it to be a very wonderful feast?" asked little Laurent.

"It is indeed," Olivier assured him. "Do you not know the part which Alain here is to play?"

"Do not tell him, Olivier," interrupted Alain. "Let him have a surprise—if he can keep awake so long."

The hours between dinner and supper passed slowly for the three boys. Owing to the events of the day and the preparations for the evening, nobody had time or thought to spare to them. As a rule they would have had lessons to do; a chapter of Roman history to read; an air on the viol or the harp or the flute to learn by heart; a five-part song to practise with the music-loving Count of Charolais. Or the duchess might have sent for them to her own apartments, to play chess with her ladies, or to read aloud from the old romances of King Arthur and his knights while she plied her needle. But to-day they were forgotten. So Alain suggested that they might ask leave to have a game of paume. This was something like our game of tennis, but it was played in a covered court with bats and balls.

Permission was given, but as they found that Laurent was too small to hit hard enough, Alain, Olivier, and two of the other pages played, while the boy from Franche-Comté ran after the balls which they failed to hit.

Towards sunset, when the light was getting a little too dim, de Charny came to the paume-court and shouted to the players.

"Pages, pages—pick up your balls—put away your bats—it is time to make yourselves ready. Comb your hair—wash your hands—don your tunics of flame-colour and grey. An hour hence the banquet will begin, and you must all be in your places when the duke enters."

The pages, nothing loth, obeyed. But first they went to the buttery-hatch—that pleasant spot, near the kitchen, where hot dishes were handed out from the cooks to the servers, and snatched a hasty meal of wheaten bread and odd wings and legs of roast fowl; for in the banquet which was to follow no

one beneath the rank and dignity of a knight would have a share.

The great hall of Duke Philip's castle was a glorious sight when the pages, hastily brushing the crumbs off their tunics, slipped in at the side door. Faint gleams of September daylight still crept through the high, pointed windows, but each iron cresset in the wall held its newly kindled and gaily flaming torch. A canopy of cloth-of-gold had been set up over the three throne-like chairs destined for the duke, his duchess, and his son. Other chairs, rather less throne-like, awaited the more distinguished guests, and long benches on either side of the table those of lesser degree. On the great sideboard of Flemish oak stood a shimmering array of goblets, flagons, bowls, and dishes to hold rose-water.

The table itself was covered with black velvet embroidered all over with small bronze cannon, each with a tongue of scarlet-and-gold flame leaping from its mouth—one of the favourite devices of the duke, who took a keen interest in the new-fangled science of gunnery.

"Oh!" breathed Laurent, eyes and mouth opening as if pulled by the same string. "Oh!"

He was gazing at the various objects with which the table was decorated, and they were indeed astonishing. At one end was a plaster model of a church. Tapers lit inside made the stained-glass windows glitter like jewels, and in its fretted tower a chime of little bells rang softly with every breath of wind. Near it was a model ship, with rigging of golden cords and sails of many-tinted silk. Little figures of sailors could be seen, one holding the helm, and others pulling ropes, or keeping a look-out from the small gallery near the top of the mainmast. Then there was a windmill of glass, and near it a tiny fountain from which rose-water spouted under the shade of apricot-trees gay with both fruit and blossom. Opposite the duke's chair was an enormous pie with a crust like the steep roof of a church.

"Will they eat up all that pie?" asked Laurent.

Alan laughed.

"Wait," said he, "and keep your eyes upon that crack in the crust which looks as if someone had begun to cut it open."

A stir announced the entry of the duke, the duchess, and the rest of the guests. They walked the whole length of the table admiring the decorations, and then took their places.

THE 'WEEPING LADY'

The pages were now on duty, and had to be alert to help the esquires who were carving the roasted birds carried in on dishes of gold-and-blue enamel. Cranes, peacocks, and swans were among them, all decked with their own plumage. Much skill was needed in carving them, and de Charny whispered to the pages to watch him well, for in a year or two it would be their task to do the same. When each guest had been served, wine was carried round. After that, one page went to each with a ewer of rose-water while another stood by with a shallow basin and a fine damask towel, so that fingers made sticky by being used as forks might be washed and wiped.

For two hours the company continued to eat and drink, cheered by the music of the minstrels in the carved gallery at the farther end of the hall. De Charny told the pages that no fewer than forty-eight different sorts of fish, flesh, and fowl had been eaten—to say nothing of sweetmeats, fruits, and spices of many different kinds.

Now came the hour when the duke and his friends were to be entertained with a performance by members of the court. They leaned back in their chairs—at least, those did who had chairs—and prepared themselves to be amused.

"Watch the pie," whispered Alain to Laurent.

De Charny and another esquire stepped forward and lifted off the large slice of crust which had been cut in advance; and up bobbed the heads of a band of musicians, who had been waiting in the stuffy darkness all the evening.

A shout of laughter rose and rippled round the table.

"Let the birds sing," said the duke.

Four of the musicians sang, while a fifth and a sixth played upon harp and pipe.

"That was good sport," declared the guests, much amused.

The next item was curious. A horse backed into the hall, and two masked trumpeters sitting on its scarlet-draped saddle blew a merry blast. Going backward all the way, they went right up the centre and so out into the castle courtyard through a wide-open door.

Alain did not see the next piece of mumming. He had slipped away to get ready for the scene in which he himself was to take part. Laurent, though he knew that it was all make-believe, felt faintly alarmed when, to the sound of pipes and fiddles from the pie, a fearsome, grinning monster covered

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with peacock-blue scales pranced in, supporting on his shoulders a scarlet-clad acrobat balanced upside down.

"What is behind that broad green curtain under the minstrels' gallery?" he asked Olivier.

"The stage where the mummers will play," replied the older page. "Do you know what 'mummers' are? They are folk who act, or mimic, or perform in dumb-show."

"I have seen none such," said the small boy, much thrilled.

At a blast of the trumpet the green curtain was pulled aside, and a youth was seen, clad in armour but without any helmet. He was walking about and gazing on all sides, but, very strangely, not appearing to see a small artificial tree in one corner from which hung a ram's fleece dyed a brilliant orange-yellow. At the same time a clear, boyish voice was heard reciting behind the scenes:

Lo, this is Jason, royal prince and bold,
Who in a far land seeks the Fleece of Gold.

"Methinks that is Alain's voice," whispered Laurent.

"It *is* Alain's voice," his companion whispered back. "They chose him for this task because he went to school before he came here, and he can read and is not afraid to utter verse aloud before a great company."

The voice went on:

Great is his peril, but to bring him aid
Behold, Medea comes, the wondrous maid.

And Medea came, in the form of another page, disguised with a gown and head-dress borrowed from his sister, one of the duchess's ladies. 'She' made signs to the startled Jason that 'she' would be his friend, and, after placing a golden ring in his hand, withdrew in a stately manner, evidently afraid of tumbling over the unaccustomed skirt.

Look, the fierce serpent writhes with deadly sting,
But Jason slays it with Medea's ring.

From the side where the fleece hung there crawled a large and horrible creature, spouting red flame from its open jaws. Jason, after a moment of alarm, hastily held out the ring Medea had given him, and the beast flopped down dead with a loud thump. Never was a monster more swiftly, easily, or, it seemed, painlessly killed.

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"Is it dead?" asked Laurent.

"Of course it is dead. But it is not a real serpent. Two of the duke's servitors are inside the skin."

Alain's voice made itself heard once again:

Medea's magic art has won the day,
And Jason bears the Golden Fleece away.

This Jason promptly did, unhooking it with some difficulty from the tree and holding it up triumphantly for everyone to see. Medea then emerged coyly from the other side of the little stage, and hand-in-hand they departed, after bowing low to the duke and the duchess, who clapped and smiled and said to each other that it was indeed a pleasant piece of mumming, very well planned and played. The green curtain was pulled across the stage again.

"Is that all?" asked the smallest page, who was getting very sleepy but did not wish to miss any of the fun.

"No, there is one more scene," Olivier told him. "You will see. It is the 'Weeping Lady' who will appear."

"I thought she was only an image——"

But Olivier had no time to explain before the curtain was drawn back, disclosing a figure dressed as nearly as possible like the image of the 'Weeping Lady.' 'She' wore a long robe of blue velvet, girdled with gold; a silver veil round 'her' forehead hid the fact that 'her' hair was short and not long: and upon 'her' cheeks were dabbled large, gleaming drops of silver paint.

Alain—for it was he—waited silent and motionless for a moment, with his hands folded and his eyes cast down.

Then, very clearly and carefully, he spoke the verses which had been specially written for the occasion by one of the duke's esquires:

For seven seasons did I weep and mourn,
A wizard's prisoner, a maid forlorn,
Day brought no mirth to me, and night no sleep;
What should a captive lady do but weep?
Then came de Lalain and his comrades bold,
To my defence, like Arthur's knights of old.
The spell is broken and my woes are o'er,
And now the 'Weeping Lady' weeps no more.

As he uttered the last line Alain wiped the silver tears from his face with the hem of his long veil and smiled—

rather shyly—at the audience. Then he ended his speech with:

Heaven prosper Burgundy with wealth and peace,
And bless the Order of the Golden Fleece!
God save Duke Philip ever more I pray
And all the company met here to-day!

After which, bowing low, he waited for the green curtain to be drawn across so that he could pick up his long gown with both hands and scamper off the stage.

"I should not have known Alain in that robe and veil," said Laurent. "He looked taller than before."

"That," explained Olivier, "is because they gave him wooden soles two inches thick to strap under his shoes."

"He played his part well," said the page from Brabant. "The duke and the duchess were pleased. Did you see them smile and nod when he bowed?"

Meanwhile Alain was stripping off his borrowed garments as quickly as he could, rejoicing that it was only for that evening that he had to wear such trailing skirts.

The torches were burning low in the iron cressets. Only the gaunt skeletons of peacocks, swans, and cranes lay among their plumes on the great gold-and-blue dishes. There was no more rose-water in the ewers, and that in the bowls was no longer fresh and clean. The flagons of wine had been empty for the past half-hour. But the faithful musicians were still piping and fiddling inside the pie.

"Madame," said Duke Philip, turning to the duchess. "I think it is time that the banquet should end. Some of the younger pages are sleeping where they stand."

The duchess nodded her double-peaked head-dress in agreement and gathered up her long, purple train sprinkled with golden squirrels.

"As you please, my lord. It has been a noble banquet, but the smoke of the torches becomes unpleasant when they burn low."

She and the duke rose, bowed to the company, and withdrew to their own apartments, followed by their son and the members of their retinue. De Lalain and the knights who had taken part in the tournament lingered for a few moments, talking over the various contests, and then they too withdrew to bed.

It was Laurent whom the duke had spied sleeping where he

THE 'WEEPING LADY'

stood. De Charny now came and picked up the small, drowsy figure in his arms and carried him away, telling the other pages to go to their various rooms in the four towers of the castle.

Olivier had not seen Alain since the 'Weeping Lady' performance, though he looked for him up and down the great hall. When he reached the turret-room which they shared he found his fellow page already stretched on his pallet bed, with the russet cloth coverlet pulled up to his chin. A tallow candle stuck on a pewter spike made a faint, smoky gleam in the darkness.

"Oh, there you are," said Olivier. "Why did you slip away?"

"There is still some silver paint on my cheeks, and I felt foolish. Also, I am very sleepy. And to-night I shall not have to lie awake, saying my part over to myself and quaking lest I should forget it. I did not forget one word, did I?"

"Not one!"

"That is well. Give you good night. Put out the candle with your fingers—if you blow it out it makes an evil smell."



LADY WITH PEAKED HEAD-DRESS

THE NEW BOY FINDS A FRIEND

A.D. 1594

ON a certain July morning in the year 1594, an eight-year-old London boy opened his eyes with a feeling half of excitement and half of dread. That day he was to go for the first time to a new school. Farewell to the little school kept by the Parish Clerk of St Michael-on-Cornhill, where he had learned to read and write, and begun to struggle with Latin grammar, sitting on a bench with half a dozen boys no bigger than himself! Now he would have to do much more difficult lessons, under a master whom he did not know, with a score of boys older than he.

Francis Middleton looked up at the sloping rafters of his room—an attic beneath the gabled roof of his father's house in Bishopsgate. He was very proud of having a room all to himself. Until the birth of his baby sister Susannah nine months before, he had slept on a truckle-bed in the same room with his mother and father. But the baby's cradle took up so much of the not-very-large floor that it had been decided to lodge the only son of the house elsewhere.

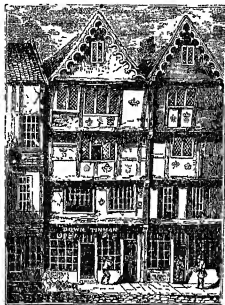
The bed was a low one, with a little wheel under each of its four dumpy legs. It could be 'truckled' (hence its name) beneath a loftier bed during the daytime, and was of a kind that the subjects of Queen Elizabeth found most useful, with their large families and small sleeping-rooms.

Mistress Middleton had seen to it that her son should rest snugly. He had an under-mattress stuffed with straw and an over-mattress full of feathers. In the winter he had another feather-mattress on the top of him as well. His pillow was also stuffed with straw, which crackled faintly when he turned his head; and the pillow-slip and the sheets had been decorated by his mother's own hand with a border of stitchery.

Beside the truckle-bed, and rising above it, was a four-

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legged oaken stool; at the foot was a large and deep oaken chest, on which stood a basin of grey pewter. From a hook in the rafters swung the boy's russet-brown tunic and his flat woollen cap of the same colour. His blue worsted stockings, full, baggy breeches, school-books, satchel, pen-case, and pen-knife were all stacked on the top of a smaller chest beneath the latticed window. Francis was not a tidy boy; but it must



ELIZABETHAN HOUSE

be admitted that he had very few places in which to store his various belongings.

As he lay looking up at the steep slant of the roof, the door was flung briskly open, and Tabitha—otherwise Tib—the maidservant entered, with a pewter jug in one hand, and some folded linen in the other.

“Ho, Francis!” was her greeting. “Make haste—it is nigh seven o’clock. I have brought you a clean shirt and a clean towel. Up, now—here is water to wash with. The water-carrier has just been round with his barrel.”

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"I hope it is clean water from the conduit in Cornhill," said Francis. "He brought us river-water yesterday, and it looked muddy and smelt ill."

"Why, what a lordly gallant is here," laughed Tib. "Maybe he wants a sweet-smelling soap-ball such as the mistress uses o' Sundays."



LONDON WATER-CARRIER

Francis was now pulling on his stockings.

"I pray you, Tib," said he, "tarry a little. Pour the water over my hands. Pour high, so that it makes a splash."

"Yea, forsooth—and who is to wipe up the water if it is spilt—who but me? Is it not enough that I must carry it hither?"

She set down the ewer, flung the towel over it, and handed Francis his clean shirt.

"Have a care," she urged him. "Do not tug so hard at the sleeves. I have enough to do without being forever a-mending of your linen. Now, here is your doublet—do not

button the cuffs till your hands are washed. So. Now, truss up your points."

By this last command Tabitha meant to tie the laces with which the knee-breeches were fastened to the doublet. When it was done, Francis put his hands palm downwards in the basin, and the good-natured maid poured the water over them as he had prayed that she should.

"Rub behind your ears," said Tabitha, "and do not forget to comb your hair, or you will be chidden below stairs."

"Where is my father, Tib?" asked the boy, rubbing vigorously.

"Master Middleton is in the shop. Get you down and ask his blessing."

She lifted the basin off the chest and, thrusting open the casement with her elbow, tossed the water out. It fell with a loud slap on the paving-stones of the back yard.

When Tabitha had bustled away, Francis did not linger long. Forgetting to comb his hair, he paused only a moment to rattle through his prayers, including the one that the queen's grace might be saved from all her enemies, and then went downstairs, passing the first storey of the house, where were the great bedchamber and the main living-room, and descending to the street-level. His father, Master Martin Middleton, was already busy among his bales. The two apprentices, Dick and Ned, were hard at work setting the shop to rights for the day, Dick sweeping the floor while Ned, mounted on a stool, burnished the brass mermaid which hung outside the door. Every shop in Bishopsgate had its sign, either painted on wood or wrought in metal. Those signs did the work of street numbers. You did not ask for 'twelve' or 'twenty-four' Bishopsgate, but for the shop at the sign of the Mermaid, or the English Rose, or the Three Swans, as the case might be.

Master Middleton, when he saw his small son, laid down the quill pen with which he had been making entries in his parchment ledger.

"God give you good morrow, my father," said Francis, rather timidly.

"Paul's bell has just rung the seventh hour," returned the merchant. "You are a sluggard to-day. Have you said your prayers?"

"Yes, father."

"Not forgetting to pray for the queen?"

"Yes—I mean no, father."

"Why then, God's blessing on you, my son. But remember, he who rises betimes prospers betimes. We will go to breakfast."

Dick and Ned, who had breakfasted in the kitchen an hour before, continued to work with every appearance of industry while Francis followed his father upstairs. Some 'prentices ate at the same table with their masters, but Mistress Middleton had other ideas.

She was waiting for her husband and son in the large living-room above the shop. On her head was a close-fitting linen

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cap; round her neck was a crisply pleated ruff; and her full-skirted gown of black was open down the front, showing the scarlet satin petticoat. Over this she wore a short apron of fine linen decorated with embroidery in black-and-tinsel threads. Beside her stood her other maid-servant, Dorothy or 'Doll,' holding the baby Susannah, who had just been bathed and fed and wrapped from the feet upward in clean swaddling-bands. From the way in which she waved her arms it seemed as if she would have liked to kick a little as well. But all babies then—and long after—were swaddled. In one small fat hand she held her silver-gilt rattle, hung with tinkling bells and tipped with red coral.

"I pray you give me your blessing, mother," said Francis.

"Why, so I do, my son, with all my heart. But—have you combed your hair?"

"Alack, mother, I forgot."

"Fie for shame, Francis—you look like some savage man newly brought from the Indies. You will frighten your sister. Look, Susannah—is he not like a wild, savage man?"

But Susannah refused to be frightened, and continued to smile and coo.

"Take her away, good Doll, and put her in her cradle to sleep again. Now, husband, let us sit at table."

When Doll had departed, the merchant, still wearing the high-crowned black beaver hat without which he was seldom seen during his waking-hours, said a rather long grace and seated himself at one side of the square table, with his wife opposite him, and his son between them. On either side of the fireplace stood a broad and high arm-chair finely carved out of glossy brown oak, but at table the family sat on wooden stools. A linen cloth was spread, and on it were pewter cups and plates, and spoons of a kind of brass-ware called 'latten.' There were knives with wooden handles, but forks had not yet appeared in the homes of the merchant-class.

The meal consisted of bread-and-butter, boiled beef, and ale. Francis, for once, was not very hungry. He looked round the familiar room and wondered what he would have seen and done, and suffered, before he saw it again that afternoon. The walls were covered with painted cloth, the designs showing scenes from scripture, not very well done. The figures were almost life-size. They were shown wearing the same kind of dress as Master Middleton wore; and out of

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their mouths sprouted long scrolls on which scriptural texts were written. At the upper end of the room stood the richly carved court-cupboard or sideboard, on the top of which were ranged all the salvers and flagons, and rose-water bowls of silver or silver gilt which Middleton possessed.

"What ails you, my son?" asked Mistress Middleton, noticing that Francis was not eating with his usual eagerness.

"Nothing, I thank you, mother."

"Your schoolmaster will be pleased if you eat as little at dinner," remarked the merchant, with a grim smile.

Francis knew that it had been arranged that he should take his midday meal at school, but the reminder did little to encourage him.

When breakfast was over, Francis was sharply bidden to fetch his cap, satchel, books, and ink-horn, and, while he was about it, his father spoke a few stern words to Dick and Ned, who were to be left in charge of the shop while their master went with the boy to the school in St Paul's Churchyard.

They set off together in the bright sunshine, Francis trotting at Master Middleton's side, and finding it rather difficult to keep pace with his long, stately steps. As they passed a fine brick-and-timber house with a large garden, the merchant remarked that my lady Gresham's roses were in rare bloom that year. Francis knew the old lady well by sight, with her widow's hood and her black velvet mantle. He knew, too, that her husband, Sir Thomas, had been the planner and builder of the Royal Exchange, that vast bazaar, market-place, and meeting-house of merchants, which the queen had opened in person when Martin Middleton himself was only a little boy. Now Mistress Middleton loved nothing better than to spend an hour or two there, walking slowly from stall to stall, sometimes followed by Tib or Doll, whom she took to carry her purchases when she had plenty of money to spend.

Francis approved highly of the Royal Exchange. His mother sometimes bought a toy for him there, or even—and those were days not to be forgotten—took him with her and let him feast his eyes on all the wonderful or amusing wares for sale—anything from a mouse-tiap to a suit of armour.

By way of Cheapside, with its high, gabled houses and its goldsmiths' and silk-merchants' shops, Master Middleton led his son to the great cathedral, towering above them, a forest of fretted pinnacles. Old St Paul's, which perished in

the great fire of London less than a hundred years later, was one of the wonders of Christendom. Its steeple had been struck by lightning in 1361, but even without it the building was marvellous to behold. In the churchyard was an open-air pulpit, known as Paul's Cross, where the more serious-minded Londoners used to meet to listen to sermons three—and even six—hours long.

"Let me see, let me see," said Middleton, pausing and gazing round among the countless signs swinging before the houses. "It is the sign of the Silver Pelican which I seek."

"Is that it, father?" asked Francis, pointing to the picture of a glittering bird over a narrow doorway.

"The boy has great need of schooling who does not know the difference between a pelican and a swan," was the crushing answer.

A moment later the Silver Pelican was sighted, and, pushing his son before him, the merchant entered the tall, narrow building of which it served as the sign.

A middle-aged man, in a high-crowned hat, and a long black gown clasped with many pewter buttons, came forward to greet them.

"God save you, good Master Middleton—you have brought your son, I see."

"God save you also, good master. Yes, here is my son, Francis by name, an idle lad, and something slow of wit."

Francis cast an appealing glance at his father, but there was no softening of the face above the square-cut beard. Middleton did not believe in encouraging the young. Sharp words, he always said, were so many spurs to prick them on to virtue.

"Well," said the schoolmaster, "we shall see. The terms are agreed, are they not? Five shillings a week, with an extra three shillings a month for his dinner. And in the winter you must furnish him with candles."

"They are high terms, but I do not grudge them if you make a good scholar of him—and a good citizen. Hold, I will pay a quarter in advance."

While his father fumbled in the leather pouch he wore at his girdle, Francis stole a peep at his fellow-pupils. There were fourteen or fifteen of them, sitting on benches round a large, bare, ink-spattered table. Each had two or three books at his

elbow, an ink-horn by his right hand, and a large sheet of paper before him. At the head of the table was the schoolmaster's high-backed chair, with an alarming bunch of birch-twigs hanging from the arm. The boys all seemed to be working most earnestly, with their noses bent over their tasks; but one of them, a red-haired boy with a merry eye, glanced up and made a face at the new pupil. It was quite a friendly face, and Francis grinned faintly in reply.

When Master Martin Middleton was just about to depart the schoolmaster called him back.

"The day after to-morrow will be a holiday," said he. "It is the blessed day of the defeat of the Spanish Armada, and the school will be closed."

This was joyful news to Francis, but his joy was soon damped.

"To be sure it is, and a joyful and blessed day, indeed," returned the merchant. "There will be a good sermon at Paul's Cross. If I can spare the time from my shop I will go and listen for two or three hours. And that my son may not waste his time, he shall go with me."

When Middleton had gone, the schoolmaster told Francis to open his satchel and put his books, quills, penknife, and ink-horn on the table in front of the bench where he was to sit. The boy was rather pleased to find himself planted beside the red-haired pupil. He hoped they might become friends, and he felt in need of a friend.

"Come, boy," the master was saying, "let me see how far you have gone in Mantuanus."

This was a book of Latin verse written by an Italian from Mantua, and nearly every schoolboy of the Elizabethan time had to con it. Francis had begun to learn some passages from it already, but when he tried to say the first line he stumbled and stuttered, and the words seemed to fly away like so many frightened pigeons. He could not remember that *terra* meant 'the earth,' and translated it as 'the sky'; he got himself into a dreadful tangle over the grammar; and in his agitation he knocked over the ink-horn of his neighbour. Luckily, there was not much ink in it.

"It is clear to me," remarked the schoolmaster, "that you will have to learn the meaning of the word *ferula*."

But Francis knew that it meant a rod.

"If it please you, sir," he said. "I am very sorry. And, if

I may, I will pour some ink out of my own ink-horn into my fellow's, to make up for what was spilt."

"So be it. And then write me the first three rules concerning the declension of nouns from Master Lilly's Latin Grammar."

Francis had rather looked forward to opening his fine new pen-case, taking out a crisp grey quill, and sharpening the point with his bright steel penknife; but now he felt unhappy and shy. And he poured the ink into his neighbour's horn with such an unsteady hand that he nearly added several drops to what had already been spattered on the table.

"It is no matter," whispered the red-haired boy. "Let be."

Francis would not let be. He wanted to make friends with the boy, and he would gladly have given him all his ink if the other ink-horn would have held it.

After that, propping his chin on his hands, he read carefully the rules set forth by the learned Master Lilly for the benefit of the scholars of St Paul's School nearly a hundred years before. Why, he wondered, had the ancient Romans taken the trouble to invent grammar! The Parish Clerk had told his boys what famous conquerors the Romans were, and what great builders of roads and walls and bridges—had they not built a wall about London of which large portions could still be seen?—and Francis considered that they might well have spent more time on these useful pursuits, and less on grammar. He did not understand that the Romans had borrowed many of their grammatical ideas from the Greeks, and that in Greece grammar had been a natural growth, not something created on purpose.

Presently he began to write, slowly at first, and with some spluttering as the pen dug into the brittle, yellowish paper. The master was reading out of a fat book bound in red leather, but he kept a sharp eye on them all, and when one boy tried to make the next boy blot his copy-book by nudging his elbow, the birch-twigs were brought into use. The quills squeaked and scraped, and some of the scholars breathed hard with the efforts they were making. Outside, the clattering of heavy carts and the loud cries of the carters made a terrible din; and at ten o'clock the bells of St Paul's began to chime.

Just as Francis wrote the last word of his lesson and glanced up, a cabbage-butterfly came fluttering across the schoolroom, hovered for a moment on a bookshelf close-packed with

learned-looking books, and then flew hither and thither as if seeking a way of escape. All the boys knew it was there, but only the new boy dared lay down his quill and follow its flight with interested eyes.

"Ha, sirrah," rapped forth the master. "Your wits stray—you are an idle knave—nevertheless you shall not be whipped if you can tell me the Latin name for the creature yonder."

"*Papilio*," whispered the red-haired boy very softly, as Francis opened and shut his mouth.

"*Pillo*!" said Francis, hoping he had heard aright.

Up from his chair rose the master, with his birch-twigs in his hand

"Why, what knaves have we here—Zachary Watt who whispers, and Francis Middleton who raves! Come hither, Zachary, and I will make you wish that you were a *papilio*, and you, Francis, that you had a *pillow*, not under your head, but on your back!"

At these grim specimens of wit the other boys laughed as in duty bound. Zachary took his thrashing calmly—it was not a very severe one, and, being a mischievous boy, he was punished often—but Francis had some difficulty in gulping down a sob. He had often been told that King Solomon, the wisest of men, had declared that to spare the rod was to spoil the child, but he could not help wishing that someone would try whether King Solomon was right. How good he would be, thought Francis, how diligent, how attentive, if only he were never beaten! No doubt many other small boys thought the same; but their parents and teachers failed to put them to the test. Master Middleton had been beaten when he was young; it had done him no harm; indeed, it had done him good. Therefore his son must follow the same road. And so felt and spoke every English father of those days, however kind and fond a parent he might be

"If," thought Francis, as he went back to his place, "if my father comes to fetch me, he will ask how I have behaved to-day—and if he hears that I have been beaten, he will beat me again when I get home—unless my mother begs mercy for me."

When the bells of St Paul's rang out the hour of eleven, the boys were bidden to lay down their quills and their books and go and wash their hands for dinner. This they did in a barrel of water, beside which hung a long strip of coarse

towelling. Francis managed to take his turn next after Zachary and, as they moved away side by side, he said, "I am very sorry, forsooth, that I did not hear you aright. And I am beholden to you for telling me the word I did not know."

"It is naught," returned the red-haired boy, cheerfully. "What is a beating more or less? The smart is gone already. Dō not be afraid of our master. He looks grim, but there are many more stern than he. I have an aunt compared with whom he is a very lamb. He gives us enough to eat, too, which is more than my last schoolmaster used to do."

"Have you been at this school long?"

"Almost a year. It is a good school. Most of the scholars are good fellows. Your name is Francis Middleton, is it not? Was that your father, the grave man who brought you hither?"

"Ay. He is a mercer, and we live in Bishopsgate. Your name is Zachary Watt?"

"The same. My uncle—with whom I live, for my father is dead—is a herbmonger, and we dwell in Bucklersbury."

"Bucklersbury," echoed Francis. "Oh, I know that street well—my godmother, Mistress Barton, dwells there. How sweet it smells, when all the herbs are being dried, and the fragrant gum is being melted, and the spices crushed!"

"Yea, truly—and when I am older I am to be a herbmonger like my uncle. What are you going to be?"

"A mercer like my father. He sells silks and velvets. The queen herself has bought rich silken stuffs from him."

"And my lord of Essex buys his spices from my uncle," proclaimed Zachary, not to be outdone.

"Who speaks of my lord of Essex?" asked a deep voice. It was the schoolmaster's. Zachary explained, and the frown faded beneath the high black hat.

"So! Well, my lord of Essex is much in favour with the queen's grace, and a gallant young lord he is. But it is not seemly that the names of such great persons should be bandied to and fro upon the lips of babes. Come, dinner is ready. Keep your caps on, lest stray hairs should fall into your porridge."

All the books, quills, and ink-horns had been cleared away, and the table had been laid for the master and six or seven boys—the other eight went home to dinner, and were already gone. Each boy had an earthenware bowl of porridge made

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of turnips and barley; after that came small portions of salt fish, served with dried beans. To drink they had pewter mugs of a weak kind of ale known as 'small beer.' And there was plenty bread for everyone.

It was Zachary's turn to say grace, and Francis was glad that his new friend did this so well that the schoolmaster had



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no fault to find. During the meal that learned man talked to his pupils about Plutarch's *Lives* of the famous Greeks and Romans, which, translated into French by a gentleman called Amyot, were to form the first part of the afternoon lesson. He also discoursed upon the approaching holiday in celebration of the defeat of the Armada six years before, and asked if any of the boys could remember seeing the queen when she came to render thanks to God at St Paul's. Some of the older boys recollected being held up by their fathers to see her Majesty pass. None of them dared say that all he could recall was a fleeting image of an old lady with a dead-white, withered face, a red wig heavy with large pearls, and a smile that showed long, discoloured teeth.

Zachary, when questioned, explained that he had not been

in London then, but in Devonshire; and added that his father, a sea-captain, had fallen in the famous midnight attack by the English fire-ships on the huge Spanish galleons at anchor off Calais.

"A noble death, a worthy end," said the schoolmaster. "Look to it, Zachary Watt, that by your actions you bring no stain upon a shield so fair."

Francis was much impressed and stole a respectful glance at his new friend, but Zachary buried his comical face in his pewter pot and would not meet his eye.

When dinner was over, the boys were allowed half an hour's recreation. Some of them produced tops and marbles; others preferred to chat. In this last class were Zachary and Francis.

"I heard your father say," began the older boy, "that on our holiday he will take you to Paul's Cross to hear a sermon. Is that your notion of a holiday?"

"Nay—but it is my father's. He hears sermons very gladly. Yea, for five and six hours he will stand and listen, and not budge."

"Good luck, I am glad my uncle is not made of such stuff. He loves stage-plays better than sermons."

"Stage-plays!" echoed Francis, half-shocked, half-thrilled. "Have you ever been in a theatre?"

"Yea, truly, and more than once. To the Globe, on Bankside. And to the Rose, too. It is the rarest spot. But the Puritans love it not."

"Is my father a Puritan, think you?"

"If he loves no honest mirth and will spend his holiday hours at Paul's Cross——" Zachary paused, not wishing to hurt the boy's feelings.

"He does not love mirth much," admitted Francis, ruefully. "And he reads to us from the Bible every night and morning—and hears me my catechism and my collect as if he were himself a clerk or a parson. Does that mean that he is a Puritan?"

"Something of that colour, methinks. But do not grieve. You need not be one also when you grow up."

"Need I not? Oh, that is brave news. Then I can wear a rose on my shoe and a pearl in my ear, like the gallants who come to our shop; and I can sing madrigals instead of psalms—and go to stage-plays if I please!"

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"As for stage-plays," continued Zachary, "you will have to read some Roman ones when you know enough Latin."

"What, had the Romans stage-plays?"

"That they had. And there was a man called Plautus who wrote some merry—'comedies,' they call them."

"Tell me about it," urged Francis.

"The one I know best is called *Menachmi*. It is about two brothers, twins, so like each other that none could tell them apart. And there were two other brothers, servants, who were also like each other. And there was a rare confounding of each with each, and much mirth."

"I wonder if my father knows of these things," mused Francis.

"If he himself went to school, he must know. But doubtless he sees no harm in stage-plays so long as they are not acted on the stage."

One of the other boys had strolled up and was listening with interest to what they were saying.

"My cousin Salathiel is a stage-player," he said, "yet he had no mind to be one. He was kidnapped by the players at Blackfriars."

"Kidnapped!" echoed Francis, amazed.

"Yea, forsooth. When they took him they said it was to make him a chorister of the Chapel Royal—that would have been lawful—but it was no such thing. Now he likes his life well enough. They are all boys in that company. Salathiel plays the old men, with his knees crooked and a grey beard hanging at his chin."

"That would be better sport than conning grammar under the schoolmaster's rod," declared Zachary.

"Yea, truly. And they play sometimes before the queen."

"I wish the players would kidnap *me*," murmured Francis, hopefully. But then he thought of his mother and his little sister, Susannah; and of his comfortable truckle-bed under the roof; and of Tib and Doll, who often gave him apples and cakes, and of Ned and Dick, who could sometimes be coaxed to carry him on their shoulders; and he took the wish back.

"Well," Zachary was saying. "I hope my good uncle will take me to the Globe when I have my holiday two days hence. There is a fine play there now—with pealing of cannon, and rolling of thunderbolts, and ghosts walking."

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

"We hear the noise of cannon every week in Bishopsgate," said Francis, proudly.

"In Bishopsgate? How so?"

"Do you not know that there is a plot of ground there where the gunners from the Tower come every Thursday with their artillery to practise shooting at targets? The noise shakes out the whole house. One day it shook a candlestick right off a shelf."

The interval of recreation was now over, and the boys trooped back slowly to the table. The afternoon lesson was French, and of that language Francis had as yet learned nothing. The master wagged his head over him and gave him a long list of words to learn by heart.

"After you have had your supper," said he, "read over these words six or seven times. Then, having said your prayers, sleep with a quiet mind. You shall see that to-morrow morning you will learn it easily."

Meanwhile Zachary and the other scholars had been translating the life of Julius Cæsar out of French into English and then back into French again. Francis, listening with one ear while his eyes were busy with his own lesson, wondered whether the day would ever come when he would be as skilful. He was thankful that he had been given until the morrow to master his first lesson in French.

Towards five o'clock the boy realized that school would soon be over for that day. With their eyes fixed questioningly on their teacher, the pupils began to close their books and put their pens in their pen-cases.

"Now for a reading from the Word of God," said that stern personage, "after which you can depart."

He laid on the table before him the great Bible known as the Geneva Bible, and to Francis it had a familiar look, for Master Martin Middleton had just such another at home, with the little square, black-and-white picture on the title-page, showing the Israelites just about to cross the Red Sea, with Pharaoh's chariots and spearmen in hot but not undignified pursuit.

"Now, go your ways," said the schoolmaster, when he had read a chapter from the Old Testament—it was the story of David and Goliath, which Francis already knew well but always liked to hear again.

Greatly to the relief of his son, Master Middleton had not come to fetch him. Francis could find his way home perfectly

well, even though he had never been alone to St Paul's Churchyard before; but he lingered until Zachary was ready to go, and stepped out into the noisy, dusty, sunny street at his side.

"How liked you your dinner to-day?" asked the red-haired boy, allowing the other to keep pace with him as they both turned eastward

"Well enough, forsooth—but I think we had strawberries at home to-day, and so I have missed them."

"Strawberries," repeated Zachary, rather wistfully. "It is long since I tasted any. My aunt does not think that boys should eat the things they like best."

"But your uncle——"

"My uncle is very good to me, and I love him well. But though he orders all things in the shop, and in the room where the herbs are dried and the sweet gums distilled, it is my aunt who holds sway in the house and at the table. Do I not know it!"

"Your aunt does not like you then?"

Zachary shrugged up his shoulders.

"What would you? She has no children of her own. My mother was my uncle's sister, and for her sake he is good to me."

"Forsooth, I am glad of that," said Francis, warmly.

"And I! It would go ill with me at home if it were not so."

"And your mother——"

"She died—of sorrow, they say—when she heard of my father's death."

"Zachary——" began Francis, greatly daring.

"What would you?"

"Zachary, I will pray my father and mother that I may bid you to supper with us some day. And if I pray that there may be strawberries, methinks we shall have some—and cream, too."

A grin of pure joy spread over Zachary's face.

"Now, thou art a prince of friends and good fellows, Francis," said he. "This is the first time that any one has bidden me to supper."

"Will your aunt and uncle consent?"

"Oh, surely. He because he is good—and she because there will be one mouth less to fill that evening. Here must

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I leave you—my way home lies yonder Give you good night!”

And Zachary marched away with long, swinging strides, inwardly hoping that his alarming aunt would be in one of her less bitter moods that night.

Francis trotted briskly along towards Bishopsgate. School had not been so very terrible after all. He had been beaten once, but not very severely. He had made a friend, a wonderful friend, who could say a long grace in Latin without faltering, and who, moreover, thought nothing of going to the theatre and watching a stage-play with guns and ghosts in it.

When he reached home he saw that his father was busy serving a customer in the shop, so he slipped quietly upstairs and found his mother sitting at work upon a little cap for Susannah.

“How now, my son,” said she, “how did you fare at school?”

“Well, mother, forsooth, it is a good school. The lessons are very difficult, mother, but I am going to be diligent.”

Mistress Middleton smiled at his earnest face.

“Now, heaven send thee grace to keep that good resolve, my son,” said she.

“Mother,” began Francis, laying down his satchel and cap, and drawing nearer, “I have made a friend of one of my fellows. His name is Zachary Watt. He said grace in Latin without a single mistake——”

“Why, so will *you* in time, I doubt not.”

“Ay, mother. But there is something—if but I might——”

“Say on, child.”

“Mother, he lives with his uncle and aunt in Bucklersbury. Some day he will distil herbs and spices as his uncle doth. Mother, may I bid him to supper with us some day? And may we have strawberries—and cream?”

“We will ask your father,” returned Mistress Middleton. “For my part, I am willing.”

At that moment the mercer came up from the shop and entered the room. He had just sold many ells of taffetas and velvet to a wealthy customer and was in consequence feeling amiable.

“So ho,” said he, “here is our scholar, here is our grammarian! What news from the Silver Pelican, my son?”

Francis’s mother answered for him.

THE NEW BOY FINDS A FRIEND

"Good news, husband. The boy did well. He is going to be diligent. And he has made a friend of one of his fellows—called—how is he called, Francis?"

"Zachary Watt, mother. His uncle is a herbmonger. He is a very apt scholar, and I am going to try to be like him."

"That is well said," remarked Middleton. "But I know of no herbmonger whose name is Watt. Stay, there is a certain Master Pennyfeather of whom I have heard that he is bringing up an orphan nephew—doubtless that is he."

"Yes, so please you, my father, Zachary is an orphan. His father was a sea-captain, and he died fighting against the Spaniards."

Francis could have chosen no better means of making his father feel kindly towards Zachary. Like most Londoners of that time, Martin Middleton was violently anti-Spanish. No one had rejoiced more heartily than he when, six years before, the small, courageous ships of Elizabeth had scattered the great golden galleons of Don Philip of Spain. But for the moment all he said was, "Go now and wash your hands, and put away your satchel." Francis went.

"If this sea-captain's son is a good lad and a good scholar," said Mistress Middleton, "shall we not bid him to sup here with Francis some evening, husband?"

She did not mention that the idea had come first from their son, for she feared that the mercer might think that disrespectful.

"Why, wife," said he, "that is no ill notion. Pennyfeather is a worthy man—though I have heard that he goes sometimes to stage-plays—but a worthy man, and a wealthy, if not wise. The report goes that his wife is a shrew, a sad shrew. Yes, let Francis bid the boy to supper. Let him do so, I say."

When her son reappeared Mistress Middleton nodded to him in an encouraging manner, from which he rightly guessed that his prayer had been granted. Having won so much, he felt that it would not be impossible to make sure that there should be strawberries on the table the night that Zachary came. And when his own supper appeared half an hour later he was pleasantly surprised to find a small platter of his favourite fruit before him.

"I saved these for you, my son," whispered his mother, when she saw that Master Middleton was occupied with finding in the Bible that text which he intended to read aloud

by way of grace before meat. One delight of which even the strictest Puritans did not disapprove was good eating. Francis ate with an appetite his supper of roast veal, green peas, cheese, and cherries. The strawberries, as a special treat, he kept to the last. As he munched them up, he could not help thinking of Zachary, and fearing that *his* supper in Bucklersbury was nothing like as ample or as delicious as this supper in Bishopsgate. Francis consoled himself with the hope that at least three or four times in the year his new friend would come to Bishopsgate and sup there.

When the meal was done and Tib had cleared it away, Master Middleton got out his spectacles, planted them on his nose, and read aloud from the Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians. Candles had been lit in the pewter candlesticks, for, though the sun had not yet set, the narrow streets did not admit much light in the late afternoon. When he closed the book, Francis asked if he might fetch the list of French nouns which he had to learn against the next morning.

"Ask Tib to give you a candle, and go and con your lesson in your own chamber," said his father. "Take heed that you set nothing on fire. When you have mastered what you have to learn, say your prayers, doff your garments, and lay you down to sleep. And God's holy blessing be upon you."

Francis rose and bowed to both his parents. Middleton merely gave a nod in reply, but Mistress Middleton drew the boy towards her and kissed his forehead.

"Do not wake too late, child," she whispered. "You must get up betimes."

Feeling far happier than he had felt at that hour the night before, Francis clambered up to his attic with the candle in his hand. St Paul's chimed eight o'clock. It was time for bed.

XI

OAK-APPLE DAY IN CHELSEA

A.D. 1684

FROM the square, red tower of Chelsea Church the bells rang forth the hour of eight. Already that pleasant riverside village had been for several hours awake and astir, but the pupils of Mr John Priest, in his celebrated school for young gentlewomen, were only just beginning to open their eyes.

Mr Priest, who had been a dancing-master in London before he moved to Chelsea, lived in a charming old house just west of the church—a house of soft, reddish-brown brick and dusky, weather-stained oak beams, set in a garden primly planted with myrtle, hornbeam, and yew. His ten pupils slept in two large bedrooms on the first floor, with oriel windows looking out on the river. Six girls occupied three beds in the larger room, and four girls shared two in the smaller. The bed-curtains were stiff with heavy embroidery, done by themselves in designs of trees and houses, rabbits and peacocks and snails—none of these things being shown as very much larger than the rest. The furniture was of richly carved oak, glossy with much rubbing, and when the morning sun entered by the uncurtained window, the light showed the wonderful plaster-work of the ceiling, moulded in garlands and flowers and coats-of-arms. For the Great House (as it was called) had not been built to serve as a school. It had belonged before the Civil War to an ancient Cavalier family, and it was full of traces of bygone dignity.

"Oh, dear, there is eight o'clock striking," sighed Molly Verney, without opening her eyes.

"Wait till Jane comes," advised her bedfellow, a little Irish girl called Dorothy Burke. "She will come soon enough."

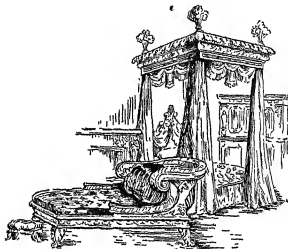
Both children wore nightgowns of fine linen decorated with drawn threadwork, and small round nightcaps to match,

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which were tied with coloured silken ribbons under their chins. From Molly's cap tufts of dark curls escaped, but Dorothy's chestnut locks were cimiped up into curl-papers, which stuck out in a row across her forehead.

"Here is Jane," murmured Molly. "You were right."

Jane was the maidservant who had chief charge of Mr Priest's young gentlewomen. She was tall and broad in



CHARLES II FURNITURE

proportion, and wore a tight-waisted and full-skirted dress of dark woollen stuff, and a mob-cap, neckerchief, and apron of coarse linen. Though she spoke and moved rather roughly, and always seemed to be in a hurry, she was a good-natured soul, and the younger children knew that she could always be trusted to smuggle bread-and-butter to them if they were hungry, get them another blanket if they were cold at night, and bind up their fingers kindly if they cut them when sharpening their pens.

"Young ladies," said Jane, going from one bed to the other. "Here is the sun shining like a newly scoured copper pan, and not one of you awake! Can you not hear the church bell? Well, if you cannot, you can hear *me*!"

They could indeed hear her, for her gruff voice filled the room. "Miss Dorothy," she went on, "I will come and

OAK-APPLE DAY IN CHLSEA

comb out your curls when you have washed and dressed. Fold up your nightcap and your nightgown. You forgot them yesterday. And you, Miss Molly, wash your face to better purpose—Mrs Priest told me yesterday that you came down to breakfast with a smear on your cheek. Look to it."

One basin between each two girls was considered enough, and hot water was not allowed except in winter. They had soap-balls, sponges, and tooth-brushes, and pretty little hair-brushes with ivory or tortoiseshell backs. Molly also possessed a narrow box for her tuckers, kerchiefs, and hair-ribbons; she was rather proud of it, for she had decorated it herself with what was called japan-work.

"Jane did not say which gown I was to wear to-day," murmured Molly, as she stood in her white linen petticoat, brushing her hair.

"I am wearing my rose-coloured taffety, whatever Jane may say," declared Dorothy, opening the high, oak cupboard where the dresses of the four little girls hung. The other two had been slower about their toilet, and when Jane came crashing in on them like a whirlwind they were still paddling their hands in their blue-and-white pottery wash-basin.

"Dear Jane, kind Jane, I may wear my saffron-yellow lutestring, may I not?" prayed Molly, running up to her.

Jane reflected for a moment, with her arms a-kimbo.

"Well," said she, at last, "I'll not say 'no.' You are all going to church to-day, and brave garments will become you. As for you twain, Miss Orinda and Miss Anne, your sea-blue watchet-silks will be best."

"Why are we going to church?" asked Anne, who was the baby of the group, and only seven years old.

"Because it is to-day the twenty-ninth of May, little miss—the day when King Charles enjoyed his own again. By breakfast time you will hear the bells of Chelsea ringing a merry peal. Come here, Miss Dorothy, and let me strip off your curl-papers."

Dorothy's small nose was screwed up with pain as each curl-paper came off in Jane's powerful fingers, and when the combing began she could not keep back a squeal.

"Fie, fie, little miss—if it has not pleased Providence to give you curling hair like Miss Molly here, you must endure patiently while it is made to curl."

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

"I would rather have straight locks than suffer all this twisting and pulling," murmured Dorothy.

"What, and look like a psalm-singing, long-faced Puritan? Would you then wish to wear a plain grey gown and a white hood, and never dance more?"

"Oh, no, no," cried Dorothy, quite frightened at the idea.

"Let be then. And be mindful that it was the wish of her ladyship your mother that you should have your hair curled. There—now it is done for to-day."

Anne came stealing up softly and took hold of Jane's hand,

"Must I wear my bib and apron, Jane? I am the only one here who wears a bib and apron now!"

"That you must ask of Mrs Priest, my pretty little miss. It is not for Jane to say."

With these words she stalked away, leaving Anne regretfully to don the little bib of lace-edged lawn and the short lawn apron which girls of that time usually wore till they were eight or nine years old.

Two by two the children pattered down the broad shallow steps and into the pleasant room where the table was laid for breakfast. Each pupil had her own knife, fork, and spoon, usually a christening-gift from a kind god-parent. Some of these were of silver, some of silver-gilt; Molly's had the tiny bearded figure of an apostle on the top of each, and Dorothy's a small bird called a 'martlet,' which was the crest of her family.

There was a carved oak chair at each place, and at either end of the table a larger and statelier chair, with a cushion of rose-red velvet edged with rather shabby fringe. In one of these chairs Mrs Priest was already seated, a prim, pale lady with a mass of stiff, fair curls all over her head, wearing a gown of flowered cotton and a tucker and sleeve-edgings of lace. Her sleeves, like those of all the girls, ended at the elbow. A little to her left was a well-scrubbed bread-board, supporting an enormous, long loaf and a glittering steel knife with a deer's horn handle. And beside her stood Jane, keeping a sharp eye on her small charges. A grey pottery bowl of butter flanked the loaf.

"Good morning, young ladies," said Mrs Priest, in a mincing, affected sort of voice.

"Good morning, madam," answered the little girls,

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dropping deep curtseys. This they did very gracefully with the exception of Anne who, being small and chubby, nearly toppled over.

"Oh," exclaimed Dorothy, just as she was going to sit down, "I have forgotten my kerchief. May I run up and fetch it, madam?"

"You may fetch it, but you may not run. Walk gracefully, keep your chin up, turn out your toes. What would Mr Priest say if he saw one of his young gentlewomen *running*?"

Molly curtseyed again and slipped away. As long as she was in the breakfast-parlour she moved slowly, but once outside it she stole quickly along, holding up her saffron-yellow silk skirt in both hands. Mr Priest might appear at any moment, but she hoped for the best.

When she reached the top of the stairs she saw a tall figure advancing from the farther end of the landing. A stream of sunlight from a high, many-paned window behind it threw the face into shadow, and for a moment Molly wondered who it could be. The high-heeled shoes, the full-skirted coat and deep-cuffed, ruffled sleeves seemed familiar, and so did the strutting, stately walk. But who was this stranger with the almost bald head tufted with a few clumps of thin hair that glittered silver in the light? She stopped short, half frightened, and as she did so the mysterious personage caught sight of her. Then, to her great astonishment, he gave a startled leap and, throwing aside all dignity, plunged headlong into the nearest open door, which happened to be that of Mr Priest's own room.

"Oh," thought Molly, "Mr Priest will be angry—no one must go in there without knocking! But I had better fetch my kerchief before he comes forth again."

She hurried into her bed-chamber, snatched a little square of lace and lawn from the japanned box, and darted downstairs again, with a hasty glance over her shoulder to see if the unknown gentleman were about. All she saw was the door through which he had disappeared slowly opening, as if someone inside were peeping out with great care. Not waiting to see more, she made her way back to her own place.

During her absence Jane had been cutting large, thick slices of bread-and-butter, and Frank, the houseboy, had been filling up the small silver or glass tankards with weak ale.

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"Grace has been said," whispered Orinda in Molly's ear. "We could not wait longer for Celadon."

'Celadon' was the nickname bestowed on Mr Priest by his pupils, after one of their number had secretly read a play by Mr John Dryden, the Poet Laureate, in which appeared a flighty and affected shepherd of that name.

But now Celadon himself entered, his long, narrow face framed in the nut-brown curls of his huge and fashionable periwig, and a silver-topped cane in one elegantly arranged hand.

He swept a low bow before seating himself at the head of the table.

"Good morning, young ladies," he said, and "Good morning, Mr Priest," they answered, rising and returning his bow.

"Oh!" whispered Molly, suddenly.

"What is it?" asked Dorothy and Orinda with one voice.

"I will tell you at play-time—hush!"

"No whispering, young ladies, I beg," proclaimed Mr Priest, glancing sharply round the table and rapping on the floor with his cane. "Any young lady who has any observations to offer of an amusing or instructive nature is invited to speak in a clear and correct manner, so that she may add at once to our knowledge and our enjoyment."

A dead silence followed these encouraging words.

"Now, my young friends," said Mr Priest, "pay attention to me. It is to-day the twenty-ninth of May, his Majesty's birthday, and the day of his blessed Restoration in the year 1660, of happy memory. Therefore, instead of having a dancing-lesson, followed by a music-lesson, after breakfast, you will put on your hoods and tippets and accompany Mrs Priest and myself to church. Every young lady who possesses a copy of the Book of Common Prayer will bring it with her."

"Marked," added Mrs Priest, "with a piece of ribbon at the page where begins the form of service appointed by Parliament to be held upon this day. Is that not so, Mr Priest?"

"That is so, my love. And do not forget that there will be offerings of money towards the fund for repainting the royal arms in the church. Mrs Priest will give each of you a six-penny piece, which will be deducted from your pocket-money. You may now go and disport yourselves in the garden for twenty minutes. But no romping."

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As soon as they found themselves out in the sunshine the little girls began to chatter like sparrows.

"A sixpenny piece," pouted Orinda, "to be taken from my pocket-money! What do I care whether they repaint the royal arms or not?"

"Oh, Orinda," protested one of the older girls, rather shocked, "they are the king's arms—and it is not fitting ~~that~~ they should be so shabby and dim."

"But the king never comes to Chelsea."

"Yes, he does. He bathes sometimes at Battersea Reach. And he goes to and fro between Hampton Court and Whitehall by the road yonder which is called the King's Road. You know he does."

"Well, he doesn't come to Chelsea Church, anyway. We should hear about it—perhaps we should even see him—if he did. So how can he know whether the royal arms here are newly painted or not?"

"Besides," said Dorothy, who also grudged her sixpence, "I am sure the king would not wish to take our pocket-money away from us. He is very good and kind."

"How do you know?"

"My uncle has a post at court. And he says the king is very fond of little dogs—and if he is fond of dogs he is doubtless fond of children, too."

"I can tell you something more," chimed in Orinda. "He is fond of ducks as well as dogs. My godmother lives in one of the new great houses in St James's Square—and when I was staying with her last summer we walked in St James's Park. And we saw the ducks which the king feeds every day."

"But you did not see him feeding them, did you?"

"Nay—to do that we should have had to rise betimes. They say he loves to be up and abroad soon after sunrise."

"If I were a king," said Molly firmly, "I would lie late instead of rising early."

"And I!" "And I!" chimed a chorus of young voices.

Dorothy and Orinda now drew Molly aside, pretending that they wanted to show her a rose which had just budded on a favourite bush. "Now tell us," said they, "why did you say 'Oh!' when Celadon came in this morning?"

Molly began to laugh, and the more they implored her to stop, and put an end to their curiosity, the more she went on laughing.

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"Oh, for pity's sake, have a care," said Dorothy, at last. "Celadon will poke his head out of the window, and if he hears you he will come strutting out to scold you, and you will not be able to tell us till play-time to-morrow."

This warning was not without effect. Molly wiped her eyes with her kerchief, pulled down her mouth, which wanted to wrinkle up again, and told them her adventure of an hour before.

"A strange man," echoed her friends, much excited, "with a shining bald head—who went into Celadon's room—and did not come out again. Perhaps he is still there!"

"Perhaps he is a thief!"

"Perhaps he is a murderer!"

"How was it that Celadon did not see him?"

"Perhaps he hid under the bed!"

"Oh, do you think he is *still* hiding under the bed?"

"Ought we to tell someone?"

This stream of anxious questions made Molly begin to laugh again. With some difficulty she managed to gasp forth between her giggles, "It *was* Celadon—without his wig! That was why I said 'Oh!' when he came in. I saw that it was the same man."

Dorothy and Orinda, after a moment of astonishment, giggled with her.

"To be sure," said Dorothy. "We have none of us ever seen him without his wig."

"Nay," added Orinda, "he takes good care of that."

"Oh, Molly, did he see *you*, do you think? He will be cross if he did."

"He may be cross, but he cannot punish me. Mark me—he will say nothing. He cannot be sure that I saw him. He could not even be sure that it was I. Barbara is wearing a yellow dress to-day. I was glad when I saw that she was."

Even as she spoke the head of Mr Priest, complete with periwig, was thrust out of a window on the ground floor, and his high-pitched, drawling voice was heard saying, "Young gentlewomen, the twenty minutes are now past. It is time for you to make yourselves ready for public worship."

The four or five small groups of gaily coloured little figures obediently melted into one stream and flowed back into the house, where Jane and Mrs Priest were waiting to see that they put on the right tippets and hoods, that each girl had her

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own prayer-book, and that they should all be lined up when the word was given to set out for church.

In the stone-paved entrance-hall, on the top of a coffer of walnut-wood, were laid out fourteen sprigs of oak, each with at least one oak-apple among its shaggy green leaves. Loyal subjects of King Charles wore such sprigs every year on his Majesty's birthday, in memory of the time when he hid among the thick leafage of the oak-tree at Boscobel while Cromwell's men were hunting for him down below. All Mr Priest's young gentlewomen knew the story well; and some of them had heard it from people who had heard it from the king himself. Barbara, she who was also wearing a yellow gown that May morning, was rather proud because her father was a friend of Colonel Carless, the Cavalier who had shared the king's hiding-place and had pinched his Majesty when he perceived that he was getting drowsy and might therefore tumble down on to the high-crowned hat of some stern Puritan prowling just beneath.

The only little girl who had not a prayer-book of her own was Anne, who shared with her elder sister Orinda. After a good deal of fluttering and scrambling, Jane got them all into their hoods. These were of various colours and materials, some of satin, some of velvet, some of silk. Anne still wore her bib and apron, as leave to lay them aside had been refused. The oak-apple sprig was either tucked into the knot fastening the tippet or fixed with a brooch or pin to the tucker. And every child had a bright sixpence in her little satchel of brocade.

When they were all ready, Mr and Mrs Priest marshalled them into a little procession, two by two, and they filed out into the lane leading from the school to the church. The schoolmaster and his wife had taken the largest sprigs; indeed, Mr Priest's was almost a branch. Both of them were uncommonly fine; he in a black velvet coat and breeches embroidered with threads of silver and gold, and decorated with knots of cherry-red ribbon, she in a gown of grey silk and a hood in the latest fashion, peppered with spots of yellow, black, and brown.

All round stretched meadows and market-gardens, broken here and there by the high brick walls and clumps of old trees surrounding some pleasant mansion. Beyond the church, in the direction of London, new houses were springing

up, for the air of Chelsea was considered healthful, and many well-to-do people were choosing it as a home. Avenues of lime-trees had been planted, giving a delightful shade; and hospitable-looking taverns with gaily painted signboards offered refreshment to the traveller. The hedges were white with may; the Thames glittered in the sunshine; the bells of Chelsea were pealing merrily, and in the pause between each peal could be heard the answering chimes of Fulham, farther up the river.

As Mr Priest and his pupils diew near the church, they found themselves mingling in a throng of people, all bound in the same direction. There were some whose wigs and garments were very similar to those of the schoolmaster and his wife, others whose plainer attire showed that they were gardeners, shopkeepers, or tradesfolk with their womenkind. From the river-bank, where a row of tall houses was being built, came a group of bricklayers and masons, with their sleeves rolled up and their leather aprons still on. One had a rose stuck behind his ear, another had a tuft of may in his blue woollen cap; the rest were sporting oak-apples.

All these were loyal subjects, members of the Church of England and upholders of the throne. But there were other Chelsea folk whose views were quite different. These were the Puritans, who looked with cold eyes upon all these rejoicings, who stayed grimly at home while their fellow-citizens flocked to church, who stuck no green oak-boughs over their thresholds, and who believed that Mr Priest's brightly garbed young gentlewomen were one and all doomed to eternal punishment, Mr Priest himself being the godless person who was leading them thither.

For such opinions Mr Priest, if he was aware of them, would not give two straws. In his view he was, as a good churchman and a faithful subject, well fitted to have charge of the young. And were not he and Mrs Priest performing a duty to society when they taught these little girls to dance, to play the guitar, to do embroidery, bead-work, shell-work, feather-work, japan-work, and to pray for the king? Serious studies had little place in the Chelsea scheme of education!

The three pews occupied by Mr Priest and his flock were those which had formerly belonged to the Gorges family, and they faced the black slate monument of General Arthur Gorges, the last of that name to occupy the fine old house

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where the school was now held. It was a poetical monument, and Molly, Anne, and Orinda, who sat in the front pew, often amused themselves during long and dull sermons by reading and re-reading the verses carved upon it and counting the small figures of the Gorges children carved on the upper part of the tombstone. According to these verses the general must have been a very famous and important personage, equal to Julius Cæsar, Alexander the Great, and King Arthur. As his name also was Arthur, Orinda wondered whether he were perhaps a kinsman of that celebrated king.

Live, Arthur, by the spirit of thy fame!
Chelsea itself must die before thy name.

So said the monument. But neither Orinda nor Molly could find any information about Arthur Gorges in their history-books, and Chelsea, far from dying, seemed to be in a most flourishing state.

Barbara, Dorothy, and the other girls who sat in the middle pew could not see these things. But by merely turning their heads a little to the right they could see something which was much more beautiful and interesting—a great alabaster monument, adorned with angels holding brightly painted heraldic shields. High up, almost out of sight, was a marvellous golden bird with outstretched wings. In the centre, below, was a bust of a good-looking gentleman of King Charles the First's time, with a lace collar and a peaked beard. On one side was a carved likeness of his little son; on the other, one of his little daughter. The inscription said that he was Sir Robert Stanley, and that their names were Ferdinando and Henrietta Maria.

It was Dorothy who noticed that round the neck of the daughter hung a pendant with a gold bird just like the one on the top of the monument. And Barbara, whose place was at the end of the pew, was able to see that in its claws the bird held a cradle with a baby in it. But even by standing on tip-toe during the singing of the Psalms none of the girls could see whether the larger golden creature also had a cradle to hold. Mrs Priest, when questioned, told them that it had; and added that this was the crest of the Stanley family. Yes, a baby of that family had once been carried off in its cradle by an eagle; and it was rescued unhurt from the eagle's nest. What a wonderful story! Every new pupil heard it before she

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went to Chelsea Church for the first time, and several favourite dolls were given the names of Ferdinando and Henrietta Maria in honour of the two chubby alabaster children.

A large congregation had gathered under the ancient oak-raftered roof that May morning. In their gallery the players



GENTLEMAN AND LADY, PERIOD OF CHARLES II

of the fiddle, trumpet, and bass-viol were ready to put every ounce of energy into the Psalms appointed for that joyful occasion. The organist was fingering his stops lovingly; and the organ-blower, an aged cobbler who stoutly refused to yield his post to a younger man, leaned on the bellows-handle as Mr Priest shepherded his young ladies solemnly into their pews.

A moment later the clergyman and his white-robed choir

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entered from the vestry, and the Twenty-first Psalm pealed forth triumphantly:

The King shall rejoice in thy strength, O Lord

Everyone sang. Mr Priest sang with a high-pitched tenor, Mrs Priest in a fluting soprano, while the childish voices of their pupils mingled with the deep—indeed the almost grunting—tones of some of the older and portlier people of Chelsea sitting in the centre of the church.

After the prayers for the day had been read, the rector climbed into the pulpit and gave out the text:

“Now know I that the Lord helpeth His Anointed, and will hear him from His holy heaven.”

Grown-ups in the seventeenth century—and long after—liked sermons to be both learned and long, and the good rector did not disappoint the older part of his congregation. For nearly two hours he continued to preach, garnishing his discourse with numerous texts—English, Latin, and Greek—not all of which his hearers were themselves learned enough to understand. During a thundering quotation (in Latin) from the writings of a Roman Christian called Tertullian, Barbara stole a glance at Mr Priest. None of the girls knew whether he was acquainted with that language, and some of them were curious to know. Barbara was impressed to observe that he was nodding his head in an approving manner. That, she said to herself, solved the problem. He did know Latin, even though he did not teach it.

The kind old rector, leaning over the pulpit, with his hands resting on its tasselled cushion, could have told her that she was mistaken, and that Mr Priest was going in for a little piece of play-acting. For once when the rector and the school-master were admiring the various monuments in the church it had been clear that the Latin inscriptions were too much for Mr Priest, who had tried so hard to hide his ignorance that he thereby made it conspicuous. But the rector would not have told anybody this. He regarded Mr Priest as a worthy though slightly ridiculous person, and so long as he did not pretend to be able to teach Latin to his pupils, his little piece of play-acting did nobody much harm.

Looking up at the rector, the twelve little girls marvelled how he could go on talking so steadily and so long, hardly

seeming to pause for breath. Under his black skull-cap his grey hair stood out in crisp curls; two snowy bands of well-starched lawn hung from beneath his cosy double chin. And he never even glanced at the great iron-framed hour-glass which stood beside the pulpit-cushion, and through which the sand had now trickled for the second time.

"And finally, my brethren"—there was a rustle and a stir at these words—"finally, my brethren, let us remember the words of the Psalmist, of David, the sweet singer of Israel, that in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full mixed, and He poureth out of the same. As for the dregs thereof, all the ungodly of the earth shall drink them and suck them out."

It was not only Mr Priest who nodded approvingly this time. Many loyal members of the congregation nodded with him. They knew who the 'ungodly' were. They were the Puritans, the people who never came to church, or drank the King's health, or danced round the Maypole; the people who did not think the Restoration an event for which Heaven should be praised, and to whom the gay King and his frivolous friends were so many sons of Satan. Good, thrifty, industrious folk, no doubt, but hardly cheerful neighbours on a day of general rejoicing in which they would not share.

Oddly enough, Mr Nehemiah Crabtree had taken exactly the same text for *his* sermon at a meeting of Puritan Chelsea-ites only the Sabbath before; but to him—and to them—the 'ungodly' meant the King, the Bishops, the Rector, the whole Church of England, and everyone, old and young, who belonged to it.

After another Psalm had been sung to the vigorous accompaniment of the organ, the trumpet, the fiddle, and the bass-viol, the congregation trooped out into the clear sunshine. Barges with brown sails were moving down the river; and on the farther bank Battersea Marshes looked like a rippling sea of rushes.

As Mr Priest and his wife conducted their twelve charges up the lane, they noticed that each little hooded head turned sharply to the right where, almost under the shadows of one of the new brick houses, a cluster of poorly clothed children had gathered round an old man with a big, square box on his back.

"Oh, sir! Oh, Mr Priest!" exclaimed Barbara and Orinda,

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who walked last in the line and nearest to the schoolmaster. "Tis a raree-showman! Oh, may we not look?"

Before Mr Priest could answer, the man had spied the procession and, plucking his hat off his head, was coming towards them, the other children dragging curiously behind him.

"Who would see a raree-show?" he called, in a funny, sing-song voice. "Who would see a fine, brave, beautiful raree-show? The king has seen it. The nobility and gentry have seen it. Only a penny a peep!"

"Is it an instructive show, fellow?" asked Mr Priest, halting the procession.

"Instructive, master? I believe you! It shows Dido, Queen of Carthage, receiving the Trojan hero Æneas in her palace! Will you not let these here pretty little ladies see? Only a penny a peep!"

"Listen, fellow. If you will bring your show to my house—the Great House at the top of the lane yonder—I will give you a penny for every two persons who see it."

"Alack, master, you drive a hard bargain. What, Dido, Queen of Carthage, with her crown and all, and Æneas with his helmet and sword, for a halfpenny a peep!"

"Well, if you will not you need not," said Mr Priest, waving his hand to signal the little girls to fall again into line.

"So be it, master—for the sake of these here pretty ladies, who are like to weep if they do not see my show."

"In half an hour's time, then. But see here, fellow—there is nothing in that box of yours besides Dido and Æneas? I have heard of a raree-show that had living things in it, as well as pictures—a hedgehog—and certain—ahem, certain fleas taught to perform tricks. I will not have hedgehogs—or—or—anything else—brought into my house. They might escape!"

"Fear nothing, master. Here's nothing but the palace of Carthage and them as lived in it in Queen Elizabeth's time."

"Ladies," said Mr Priest, walking along beside the six excited couples. "I beg you to note that that is a very ignorant, stupid fellow. Queen Elizabeth's time, indeed! Why, according to the best authorities Dido and Æneas lived—ahem—lived *quite* a long time before that."

As Mr Priest's ideas upon the subject were so vague, his pupils remained in ignorance of the fact that if Dido and

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Æneas ever lived at all—which is doubtful—it was before the ancient city of Rome was built,¹ and therefore more than two thousand years before the days of Queen Elizabeth.

When the twelve little girls, still wearing their oak-apple sprays but now with not a sixpence among them, had vanished into the high, wrought-iron gates of the Great House, the raree-showman hoisted his box higher on his shoulders and turned back to the corner where, a small, wistful cluster of cottage children lingered.

"Now, then," said he, "can none of you spare a penny?"

They shook their heads, and the eldest of them, a boy of about nine years old, said "Nay, master—and if we *had* pennies we'd spend them on pies and apples, not on peep-shows."

"Not but what we'd be uncommon glad to see the peep-show," added a little girl carrying a baby nearly as big as herself.

"No penny, no show," grunted the raree-man, who had hoped to find more encouragement among the well-to-do people coming out of church, and was made sour by disappointment.

At this moment the rector came slowly round the corner by the church, with his eyes fixed thoughtfully on the ground. At the sight of him the children pressed forward a little, and the raree-man had an idea.

"Heaven bless your reverence," said he, again pulling off his hat. "Will you not look at my raree-show—and let these babes look likewise? It is a good, religious show, your reverence—King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba! Only a penny a peep!"

The rector paused and smiled.

"Solomon in all his glory for a penny a peep!" said he.

"Indeed, your reverence—if you would but look! I'll not charge your reverence anything—I have too much respect for your holy calling."

Seeing that the rector was interested, the man unslung the box from his shoulder and propped it carefully on the long pole screwed for that purpose to the under-side. There was an oblong pane of glass in front, about one foot high and eighteen inches across, hidden by a sort of wooden shutter which he pulled back with a string as the rector lowered his head and peeped in.

¹ See H. A. Guerber, *Myths of Greece and Rome*, new edition, 1938.



"SOLOMON IN ALL, HIS GLORY FOR A PENNY A PEEP!"

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"Upon my word, very pretty and ingenious," murmured the rector, "King Solomon—and the Queen of Sheba I think her Majesty has been lately to Whitehall or Hampton Court—her fan and the plume in her hair are of the fashion which our own queen doth now favour."

"Why, your reverence, should not the Queen of Sheba take example by the Queen of England?"

This remark seemed to amuse the good rector. He plunged his hand into the pocket of his long black cassock and brought out a few copper coins.

"Let these children also see what I have seen," said he, "There are six of them—that infant is too young to enjoy a raree-show—and here is sevenpence. And, little ones"—he added, turning to the delighted boys and girls, "when next you come to learn your catechism put me in mind to read you that chapter in the First Book of Kings which tells how the Queen of Sheba visited King Solomon."

Not pausing to hear the stammered thanks of his young friends, he continued his homeward way, leaving them to peer, one by one, into the showman's marvellous box—which they did with loud 'Oh's' and 'Ah's' of wonder.

Meanwhile Mr Priest's young gentlewomen had doffed their hoods and tippets, stowed away their satchels, and gathered in the large room known as the garden-room where they were to see the show. There was much fluttering and whispering when the showman arrived and took up a position where the light from the window would fall sideways on his box. Mr Priest had the first peep.

"Dido and Æneas," said he. "To be sure. Very lifelike and natural. My good friend Mr Henry Purcell, who wrote an opera of that name when he was only seventeen, ought to see this."

"Why, sir, so the gentleman shall, if you will tell me where to go and look for him."

"At Westminster Abbey, fellow—he is the organist there. But do not say I sent you."

The showman hastily promised that he would not. Perhaps he guessed at the truth, which was that Mr Priest's 'friendship' with Mr Purcell was the merest bowing-acquaintance.

Mrs Priest had the next peep.

"La!" she cried. "How very elegant! I must positively

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have a plume of that fashion to put in my hair. It would become me well!"

Barbara was the first pupil to get a peep. What she saw was a sort of toy theatre. The back of the box was roughly painted with hills and trees; on either side were arches and pillars cut out of stiff paper. In the centre were two little plaster figures about seven inches high. On the lady's yellow wig was a tiny tinsel crown, from which sprouted a scarlet plume. Her flowing gown was of gold stuff shot with silver threads, and in one hand she held a long-handled fan. Striding towards her was the gentleman, very warlike in a suit of armour made of gilded tin. It is not likely that they bore any resemblance either to Dido and Æneas or Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, but that did not prevent the showman from giving them whichever names he thought would please more.

"Oh," breathed Barbara, "It is *beautiful*!"

When each of the twelve girls had had a peep, the trusty Jane was invited, at the suggestion of Anne, to have one also. Her cries of wonder were louder and shriller than all the rest put together.

A simple meal of bread-and-butter, rabbit pie, and cakes was next served to the school; after which the children were occupied for an hour with a variety of curious accomplishments. Some of them were making small grottoes out of sea-shells; others were stringing tiny beads on wires and shaping these into baskets of flowers; others were fashioning garlands out of feathers; and Orinda and Barbara were decorating a box with japan-work—a process which required some very strong-smelling paints and varnishes.

A dancing-lesson followed, and this Mr Priest gave in person, humming the tune as he showed the various steps of the minuet.

"*La-la—tum-ti-tum—la-la-la—* Miss Barbara, hold up your chin—*la-la-la—* Miss Orinda, turn out your toes—*la-la, tum-ti-tum—* a graceful half-turn on the left foot—three steps forward—*la!*"

It was a pretty sight, this slow and harmonious movement of small, gaily-hued figures in time to music—even though the music was only Mr Priest's voice. When it was over, the dancers were told to repose themselves for half-an-hour, until the singing-master should come.

"If," added Mr Priest, "any young lady desires a cup of chicory-water, Jane will give her one."

There followed a rush to the pantry, where Jane was very willing to talk of the wonders of the raree-show while doling out refreshments.

The music-master was a Frenchman, Monsieur Flocon, and his broken English gave no little amusement to his pupils. He was teaching them part-singing, and each girl had in her hand the printed music of the part she was supposed to sing. He himself played a small fiddle, but as he was constantly waving the bow to mark time, the instrument was not much heard.

"*Mesdemoiselles*," cried the poor man, as the young voices were uplifted in anything but harmony, "you are not *demoiselles*—you are *moineaux*—what you call sparrows. *Vous glapissez—vous gloussez*—you—what you call—squeak, you cackle—*vous ne chantez pas*—you do not—what you call—sing!"

The pupils, stifling an inclination to giggle, paused for breath and began again.

"*Hal ça va mieux*—that goes—what you call—better. *Un, deux, trois*—perhaps when Monsieur Priest give a *divertissement* to your noble parents, they will not think after all that they have come to a *poulailler*—what you call—poultry-yard!"

Just as the song was at its height Jane threw open the door and proclaimed with a loud voice—"Miss Dorothy is to go to Mrs Priest's parlour."

Monsieur Flocon tore his wig, and in so doing pulled it askew.

"*Mais c'est impossible*—Mademoiselle Dorothee—she take the first voice—without her—nothing!"

"I ax your pardon, *Moosoo*, but them's orders—" and Jane whisked the excited Dorothy away from under his indignant nose.

Mrs Priest's parlour was the most beautiful room in the house. The mantelpiece was of stone, carved with the coat-of-arms of the Gorges family—a greyhound's head at the top and various devices, such as stars, crosses, stag's heads, circles, and diamonds on the shield below. The furniture was of oak and walnut, upholstered in wine-coloured velvet edged with thick fringe; and on a side-table stood some

vases of Venetian glass which were the pride of Mrs Priest's heart.

When Dorothy entered, the first thing she saw was a lady sitting in the best chair—an elegant lady in a flowing gown of white satin, with ropes of pearls round her neck and a pretty black-and-white spaniel on her lap.

"Come, miss, and salute her ladyship your aunt," prompted Mrs Priest, who was sitting in the second-best chair and looking rather flustered.

Dorothy hurried forward, dropped a very low curtsy, and then was graciously embraced.

"Why, child, how you have grown—and your hair is redder than ever!" exclaimed the visitor. "Still, you look well—she looks well, Mrs Priest—I shall tell my sister, her mother, when next I send a letter to Ireland."

Dorothy was busy stroking the spaniel, which licked her hand.

"I am glad your ladyship brought Marco," she said. "Did you come in your coach? Is Almanzor there?"

"Yes, child. And if Mrs Priest will give you leave, I will come again to-morrow and fetch you away to spend a day and a night at my house—and Almanzor shall make you some of this confection called 'chocolate' which the queen loves so well."

"Oh, madam, I thank you—oh, Mrs Priest, I may go, may I not?"

"If Mr Priest says yes, my dear, you may."

Mr Priest had come solemnly into the room during this conversation, and the lady turned towards him.

"I hope you will give me this pleasure, sir," said she.

"Madam, you shall be obeyed. And I hope that little miss will do credit to the teaching she has received here, and do nothing to offend or annoy your ladyship."

"Small fear of that, I fancy. She is a good, mannerly child—as children go." Her ladyship rose, with a rustling of silken petticoats, tucking Marco under her arm as she did so.

"Miss Dorothy," said Mr Priest, "you will come with Mrs Priest and myself to conduct Lady Tollingham to her coach."

"Pray, sir, let the other girls come too. Pray do, sir. Some of them have never seen Almanzor."

"So be it. Tell Monsieur Flocon they have my permission to leave their lesson for a few moments."

Poor Monsieur Flocon could only splutter his indignation when the breathless Dorothy delivered this message. Then the whole school streamed after her to the garden-gate where Mr Priest was just about to hand Lady Tollingham ceremoniously into her coach.

It was a very fine coach, bright with varnish and gilding, and bearing the Tollingham coronet and arms on every panel. The two large, handsome bay horses had coats that shone like satin, but the little girls hardly looked at them. All eyes



SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY COACH

were fixed on the negro page Almanzor, sitting on the box beside the coachman, and grinning down at them in a way that showed all his white teeth. He was very smart in a turban of silver tissue, gold ear-rings, and a red satin livery. Both servants had oak-apple sprigs on their shoulders.

The whip cracked, the great yellow wheels turned, Mr Priest bowed low, while his wife and all the young ladies dropped curtseys. With a wave of the hand, Lady Tollingham leaned back upon her velvet cushions, and so the coach rolled away, lurching perilously along the deep ruts of the lane.

Reluctantly the little girls returned to Monsieur Flocon, whom they found in no very sweet temper. But the lesson had not many more minutes to run, and when it was over Mr Priest read aloud to them from the English translation of Honoré d'Urfée's romance, *Astrée*, while they did a variety of needlework with silken threads of many colours. They loved hearing about the shepherds and shepherdesses round whom the story was woven.

Supper was between six and seven o'clock. There were

OAK-APPLE DAY IN CHELSEA

stewed pigeons, eels in white sauce, pancakes, a sort of jelly called 'flummery,' and plenty of bread-and-butter. Each child had a glass of wine-and-water, and after supper a handful of sugar-plums.

Mr Priest read prayers in the garden-room; Jane, the cook, the housemaid, and the houseboy being permitted for the good of their souls to listen by the half-open door. Then the young ladies, some of them very sleepy young ladies, trotted up to bed. When eight o'clock clanged over the river from Chelsea church there was a nightcap on every pillow, and in every nightcap the head of a small girl already fast asleep.

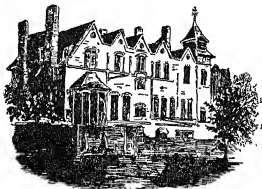
XII

THE MAJOR'S CHILDREN

A.D. 1775

THAT," said Delia firmly to herself, "is *not* my bed-curtain."

She was right. It was not. For this was the first time she had slept in this prim, canopied bed, draped in printed cotton of a sprawling Indian design. At home, in



COUNTRY HOUSE

London, her waking eyes rested on a shiny, white chintz speckled with green sprigs; and as she lay on her side, gazing at the unfamiliar pattern, she remembered where she was and what had happened. She and Stephen had come to visit grandpapa and grandmamma in the country.

Delia's ideas about the country were not very clear. As a soldier's daughter, she had seen several garrison towns—York, Winchester, and Norwich among them; and since her father had gone with his regiment to America two years before, she and her five-year-old brother had lived with their mother in London. But this was something different. This

was a small West Sussex village, so far from home that you had to jolt for two long days and nights in the stage-coach to get to it. The little girl's recollections of earlier and longer journeys were rather indistinct, and the latest seemed the longest as well as the most exciting.

Delia rubbed her eyes and looked round the room, which she had seen only by candlelight when going to bed the night before. The sun was streaming through the latticed window, but people in those days thought that night air was unwholesome, and the window itself was still shut. The walls of the room were covered with striped pink-and-white paper, and on the polished floor were two large mats, one of Turkey carpet and the other of woven straw. In the corner facing the bed was a neat little mahogany wash-stand on three legs. The jug, basin, soap-dish, and toothbrush-jar were of glittering white earthenware, ornamented with imitation bows of rose-red ribbon. To modern eyes all these things would have seemed oddly small—hardly bigger, indeed, than a large doll would require—but to Delia Hill they seemed just the right size. Under the white-painted towel-rail stood a small, oval tub of white-painted tin. There was one in each bedroom at the Rectory, and except for the big wooden wash-tubs in the kitchen, there was nothing else in the way of a bath.

For a moment Delia felt a little homesick, not only because of the strange surroundings, but also because she now realized that when she got up and the day began she would see neither her mamma, who was paying a visit to Aunt and Uncle Parkinson in Hampshire, nor her own nurse, the faithful Phoebe, who was remaining in London to look after the house while it was being re-painted outside and in. A lump rose in Delia's throat, and she winked her eyes to keep back the tears. Then she wondered how Stephen was feeling, on his little folding-bed in grandpapa's dressing-room. Boys, even when only five-years old, always pretended to be braver than girls, but Delia's private opinion was that when it came to a cut finger, or a pain after too much candy, her brother's courage was no greater than her own.

Unfamiliar sounds were going on all round her. Cocks were crowing, sheep bleating, cows lowing, and the Rectory donkey chose that moment to set up a loud hee-haw. Then there was a creaking, jangling noise—really the bucket coming up from the well, but this Delia did not then know. And

outside the door of her room there was the swish of a broom sweeping the matted landing.

Curiosity soon got the better of homesickness, and the little girl clambered out of bed and pattered barefoot to the window. She was wearing one of her best nightgowns, a pretty thing of white cotton with ruffles at the neck and wrists; and her nightcap had a quilling of crisp muslin round the edge. Girl-like, she loved to wear dainty garments, and she had been much grieved to hear her mother and Phœbe agreeing that it would be no use taking her two best silk frocks down to



COUNTRY COTTAGE

Sussex, or the neat tippet of black silk which was worn with them, or the mushroom-shaped straw hat trimmed with masses of ruched white ribbon.

"She will not need these in the country," Mrs Hill had remarked, when Phœbe was packing the horsehair covered trunk, and Phœbe, who was glad to be spared the trouble of so much folding and arranging, had answered readily, "To be sure, ma'am, she won't. There will be no parties down yonder—no walks among the fine folk in the Park."

Delia, greatly daring, unlatched the window, pushed it open, and peeped out. The sweet morning air blew in upon her face, and made her fair curls waggle over her nose.

"Oh," thought she, remembering the brick houses which greeted her eyes when she looked from her own window, "how strange it all seems!"

She could not see the poultry-yard or the stables, for these were at the back of the house, and her room was in front; but

she could see the sheep dotted over the meadows, and here and there a thatched cottage with a wisp of smoke climbing from its stumpy chimney. To the left was the grey flint tower of the church, half-hidden in a clump of dusky and ancient yews. Farther away were cornfields; the corn, just beginning to turn yellow, rippling in the breeze. A small boy was perched on the five-barred gate leading to the largest field, and even as Delia watched him he waved something which he held in his right hand, and at the terrific rattling sound which followed a cloud of rooks left their banquet among the ears of corn. She had never seen a boy scaring birds before and was much puzzled.

A hand tapped on the door and a voice called out, "Are you awake yet, Delia, my child?"

Guiltily Delia leapt back into her bed, pulling the gaily printed cotton coverlet up to her chin before she answered, "Yes, I am awake. Who is there?"

"It is Aunt Melita, my love."

With these words a tall, thin lady entered, pulling round her the wrapper of spotted blue-and-yellow chintz which served as a dressing-gown, and smiling in an encouraging manner. Her hair, which was growing a little grey over the temples, was arranged in small, flat curls round her forehead. This seemed strange to her niece, who was accustomed to see her mamma and her mamma's friends with towering head-dresses, their powdered hair stretched up over a vast pad of tow and ornamented either with plumes, ribbons, and artificial flowers, or with rolls of more hair, not usually their own. In London, or so Delia believed, only very old ladies, or maidservants, or the women who sold cherries and primroses, turnips and brooms, in the streets, wore unpowdered hair and did not pile it up high on their heads.

"Well, my dear, and how did you sleep?" asked Miss Melita Hill.

"Very well, thank you, ma'am."

"Can you wash and dress yourself without any help?" was her aunt's next question.

Delia looked a little doubtful.

"I can wash myself, ma'am—but all my frocks fasten at the back. Phœbe always buttons them for me at home."

"Then I must take Phœbe's place while you are with us."

As Miss Melita turned towards the washstand to make sure

that soap, towel, and toothbrush were all there, she caught sight of the open window.

"Lawks, child," she screamed. "Don't tell me that the night air has been coming in!"

"No, ma'am," faltered Delia. "I—I opened the window just now—to have a look at—at the garden and—and the meadows."

Miss Melita breathed again.

"La, what a turn it gave me!" said she, fanning herself with her hand. "But there can be no harm done if it was shut while you slept. It is good to let in the morning air. I always go round and open all the windows as soon as I rise. Now, my child, it is time to get up. Grandpapa does not like to be kept waiting. To-morrow I will wake you a little earlier. But I thought you must be tired after your journey."

"Oh, no, ma'am, I am not tired. May I paddle in my wash-basin, please?"

Miss Melita seemed startled.

"La, child, what a strange notion!"

"Phœbe lets us—in the summer-time, ma'am. And she bathes us in the large tub every week."

"I have heard," said her aunt in a rather flustered, anxious voice, "that some people bathe themselves every day. But this seems very rash to me. Poor grandmamma got rheumatism for life from walking on wet grass. Perhaps that is not quite the same thing. No doubt your dear mamma knows best. I will speak to Betty about the tub. You will have to be bathed in the wash-house, my love—none of the wooden tubs is small enough to be brought upstairs."

With these words Miss Melita withdrew, leaving her small niece to struggle through the first part of her dressing unaided. Over her chemise Delia hooked a pair of stays made of quilted satin and stiffened with whalebone. Her white cotton stockings were held up by garters of embroidered ribbon. Her petticoat was of a crisp white stuff called 'dimity,' and her shoes were of coral-red morocco leather with cork heels. When she had washed her face, neck, arms, and hands, brushed her teeth—she had two new ones growing in front—and combed her hair, she slipped her frock over her shoulders, and, with much effort, got the top and the bottom buttons fastened. It was made of the printed Indian cotton stuff which people then used so frequently for so many

purposes. Some of this stuff was imported from the East by the merchants of the Honourable East India Company; but English weavers were imitating it cleverly, both as regards the fabric itself and its brightly coloured designs, and this particular frock, with its wine-red flowers and sprays of feathery, dark blue foliage, had actually been woven on a hand-loom in Yorkshire.

Like other little girls of that time, she often had her hair dressed in the same way as her mother's—combed up over a pad, frizzed into curls, and powdered with flour. But Mrs Hill had very sensibly decided that these fashionable ideas would be unsuitable in the heart of Sussex; and she also doubted whether there would be any hairdresser in Chichester capable of 'doing' her small daughter's hair in the London manner. As this 'doing' sometimes took two hours, during which the victim had to sit absolutely still, Delia was not sorry to be released. Her pretty fair hair, with a slight natural curl, had been washed in a pleasant-smelling lotion, and it now hung round her shoulders in four large ringlets.

"Shall I come to you now, my love?" asked Aunt Melita's voice from outside the door.

"Yes, ma'am, if you please."

"Your brother is already dressed," remarked Miss Melita, as she stooped to fasten Delia's frock. "He is a clever boy, and needed no help."

Delia reflected that all Stephen's clothes fastened in front and that his task was easier than hers, but she said nothing. Mamma always called her a 'pert chit' if she made any remarks which suggested that the views of a grown-up person were not correct.

"There, child—you will do. Come downstairs with me now, and say good morning to grandpapa and grandmamma. You were so sleepy last night you can hardly have seen either of them."

So speaking, the aunt took Delia's small hand in her own large and bony one and led her down the shallow staircase of well-scrubbed deal to what was called the 'breakfast-parlour.'

At one end of the oval table sat the Reverend Undecimus Hill, a broad-shouldered, sturdy old gentleman whose sun-burnt face might have suggested a farmer rather than a clergyman had not his coat, waistcoat, and knee-breeches of

'black broadcloth, his grey wig of the peculiar clerical shape, and the plain white bands at his throat stamped him as a 'Clerk in Holy Orders.' Opposite him, in a high, padded chair which ran on little wheels, sat his wife. She had been a beauty in her youth, and she still had a rose-leaf complexion and a pair of clear blue eyes, but long years of ill-health had given her a sad and sometimes peevish expression. Over her simply dressed grey hair she had tied a scarf of fine black lace. Her gown was of lavender-blue, and round her shoulders was a beautiful silk shawl with long fringes silver-shot.

Between them the breakfast table was laid with dazzling white linen, glittering silver, and the gayest of china cups and saucers.

Delia, like a well-brought-up child, curtsied low to both the old people.

"Come hither, miss," said the rector, pulling her towards him, "and tell me, do you know who I am?"

"Yes, sir—my grandpapa."

"And what does that mean?"

"My papa's papa," answered Delia readily, reassured by a friendly twinkle in the small brown eyes beneath the bushy eyebrows.

"She favours you, my love," remarked the rector to his wife, "and the boy favours me."

Stephen was already seated at table—looking rather shy and longing to taste the contents of the yellow china honey-pot which stood with its lid off in front of him.

The rector growled a brief and hasty grace, and Miss Melita, who had exchanged her chintz wrapper for a gown of brown silk, proceeded to pour out the tea.

"Does the boy drink tea, or should he have milk-and-water?" asked grandmamma, addressing nobody in particular.

"I have tea at home, ma'am," ventured Stephen, rather timidly.

"Put more water in his than in ours," said grandmamma to her daughter. "Make Delia's weak also. Tea is bad for the nerves of the young."

So each child was given a cup of pale straw-coloured fluid clouded with much milk.

"This is uncommon good tea, sir," observed Miss Melita, sipping hers.

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"It is, daughter. And at Chichester it would have cost me fifteen or sixteen shillings a pound."

Miss Melita looked mysterious.

"Aaron again, sir?"

"Aaron again, daughter. He ran a cargo three days since. And he charged me but ten shillings for a pound of this choice Bohea. Only I wish that he had not whistled and hallo'd beneath the window in the bright moonlight when he brought it. Quite unnecessary—and not discreet."

Delia was puzzled by this conversation, to which Stephen, happy with bread-and-honey, had not troubled to listen. She had often heard her mamma complain that tea was so dear; and Phoebe had told her exciting tales about the smugglers who cruised round the Sussex coast and slipped past the officers who collected the king's taxes on such wares as brandy, tobacco, lace, and tea. Could it be that Mr Aaron, the whistling and hallo'ing Mr Aaron, was a real, live smuggler?



TEAPOT OF PERIOD

"What do you propose to do this morning, sir?" hinted Miss Melita.

"I shall ride first into the town and go into the Inn to read the London papers. Fivepence is a monstrous sum to pay for a sight of them—but one must know what is happening in the world. And there may be news from America. After that I have some business with Elphick the corn-chandler, and I must go into the saddler's about a new bit for Daisy. On my way home I will look in on the Squire. Those young pheasants of his are a worse plague than the rooks in my glebe land."

"For my part," said Miss Melita, "I have much to do in the still-room and the linen-cupboard. After that, I propose to step down to the school and bid good-day to Dame Stapley and take her a bottle of my marjoram wine—she says it does her more good than all the apothecary's medicines put together."

"And what is it proposed to do with these children?"

asked grandmamma, taking a pinch of snuff out of a little enamelled box. "*I cannot take charge of them.*"

"Stephen can come with me," said the rector. "And no doubt Delia will like to help her aunt."

This plan meant a most amusing morning for Stephen, who rode in front of his grandfather on Daisy, the fat white cob, and who was delighted with all the sights and sounds of the small market-town, six miles away, where everyone seemed to know the rector and to be pleased to see him. While the newspapers spread on the baize-covered table in the inn parlour were read and discussed, Stephen wandered round the room looking at the vividly coloured prints on the walls, mostly of subjects from Bible-history, though there were portraits of King George III and Queen Charlotte, wearing their crowns—both with bright red cheeks and round, popping eyes. Then he discovered a glass case with a huge, shiny stuffed fish inside it, seeming to float among water-weeds. The little boy stood on tiptoe to see better, wondering if it were alive or no. Its eye almost seemed to wink at him, but not one of its fins moved. Stephen decided that it was dead, but he could not imagine how it came there.

When the rector had read all three papers, two daily and one weekly, and had discussed with a group of grave gentlemen the news—some of it two months old—which they contained, he grabbed his grandson by the collar of his sky-blue jacket, and whisked him away.

"Stay, parson," called one of the newspaper-readers, "your grandson has lost his hair-tie."

And indeed the broad, black ribbon which held Stephen's hair in a pig-tail had slipped off and was lying on the sanded floor beneath the stuffed trout.

The rector, puffing noisily, picked it up and tried to put it on again, but his unaccustomed fingers made a poor job of it, and Stephen had to confess that he himself could not tie the bow properly. "Phoebe always does it," he murmured, suddenly feeling homesick.

Without a word grandpapa thrust the boy through a swing-door and into the main room of the ancient, oak-raftered inn, where a jolly-looking woman in a flowered gown and a huge mob-cap was serving out mugs of ale to a cluster of farmers, carters, and coachmen. She glanced round in surprise when she saw the newcomers, hastily wiped her hands on her skirt,

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and came round from behind the counter, bobbing a curtsy as she did so.

"Hey, Mistress Polly," said the rector. "Will you do a deed of mercy to my grandson here and tie up his netherlock for him?"

"To be sure, to be sure, sir," crooned Polly, dropping on her knees and busying herself with the ribbon; "a pretty little gentleman it is—the Major's son, sir? And what news have you of the Major, if I may ask?"

"Little enough, Polly, little enough. He is at Boston with General Gage."

"Ah, fighting them Colonial rebels; but surely, sir, they'll soon come to heel?"

The rector shook his grey wig solemnly.

"Who can say, Polly? We have not been wise—in my view, we have been very far from wise—in our dealings with our American fellow-subjects. Lord Chatham has said so. And Mr Burke. And Mr Fox. A peck of moderation now might save us a bushel of trouble later. As it is, heaven only knows what the end will be—or when I shall have my son home again."

He heaved a sigh and then added more cheerfully, "Thank Mistress Polly, Stephen, and let us be going."

The small boy stammered his thanks and was led away under the friendly gaze of the ale-drinkers, whose salutes the rector did not fail to return.

It was not Stephen's lucky day, for when he was peached on Daisy's broad back one of his buckled shoes dropped off; it was picked up and fitted on again by a passing chimney-sweep's boy, to whom the rector gave a penny for his trouble.

"Do not spend it on strong drink, boy," the rector said, as he let the coin fall into the grimy paw stretched eagerly up to catch it.

"No, your reverence, not I. I'd rather have summut to eat, I would," answered the boy, and a moment later they saw his soot-blackened little figure vanish into the baker's shop into which he had been gazing wistfully just before.

"Grandpapa," remarked Stephen, "I'd like to be a sweep. Then I wouldn't have to be careful of my clothes, would I?"

The Rector laughed.

"Indeed, grandson, you would not like it. Getting up before dawn in all weathers—climbing barefoot up dark,

black chimneys—and seldom having a good meal—that's the life of a sweep's boy. Did you hear what that wretched child said? 'Summut to eat' Their masters half-starve them so that they won't grow too fat to squeeze into the smaller chimneys."

"Oh, sir," cried Stephen, "can't we go back and give him another penny?"

The rector hesitated, and then murmuring "Blessed are the merciful," turned Daisy's head again towards the baker's shop. As he drew rein before it, the little sweep came out, his jaws moving briskly and part of a small loaf in his black hand.

"Here, boy," called the rector, beckoning him. "Are you still hungry?"

"Oh, I be, sir, I be," mumbled the sweep, with great earnestness.

"Well, here are two more pennies for you—but don't spend them both now. Keep one of them for another time."

"Oh, thanky, sir, thanky. No, sure, I won't spend 'em now—not both on 'em. My master 'ud beat me if he thought I were havin' a good breakfast, 'e would"

"I fear," said the rector, "that your master is a hard man. I know him. I will speak with him about it the next time we meet. Now, get you in and have another bite before he spies you."

The sweep needed no second bidding. After a hasty glance right and left, he plunged back into the baker's shop, and for the next five minutes hunger and hardship were forgotten as he enjoyed the only good morning meal he had had since he could not have told when.

"I don't think I'd like to be a sweep after all," decided Stephen, as he followed his grandfather into the saddler's shop. It was a lovely shop, with a strong leathery smell and lots of shiny stirrups and bits and buckles hanging on the whitewashed walls. And the corn-chandler's, with its gaping sacks of grain and barrels of dried peas, blue and yellow, was almost as good.

Meanwhile Delia had been passing a much less eventful morning with Aunt Melita. At first the small girl had found it rather amusing to watch her aunt's activities in the still-room and the linen-room. She was allowed to strip some bunches of dried lavender for Miss Melita's pot-pourri and

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to pick the withered petals off a bowl of marjoram leaves from which the celebrated medicinal wine was to be brewed. That was fun. But there was nothing she could do among the piles of snowy-white sheets and towels, pillow-slips and tablecloths, which had to be looked over for tears or worn patches, and stacked for darning.

Miss Melita began by chatting with her niece, asking her questions about her life in London, about the governess whom she and Stephen shared with two other children, and the school to which Stephen was to be sent as soon as he was six years old. Delia and he had been taken to see the school, which was held in a large new house in the pretty village of Hampstead, some miles from London, and she was able to give a clear account of the place and the playground and the pupils whom they had seen flying kites and bowling hoops there. But presently, as Miss Melita became absorbed in her various tasks, she forgot that she was not alone, and then poor Delia began to feel rather forlorn and to wish that she were at home again. At last she plucked up courage to ask if she might fetch her doll—her 'baby,' as she called it—from her bedroom.

Miss Melita turned with a start.

"Lawks, child," she squeaked. "I had forgot you were thete! Yes, fetch your baby, by all means—and put on your hat and cloak, for it is time now for us to go out."

Delia's doll was not a baby-doll. It had a rather prim waxen face, glittering glass eyes, a stiffly curled wig of brown tow, and a tight-waisted, full-skirted brocade dress. Carolina was its name.

"Come, Catolina, my dear," chattered Delia, as she hastily rammed her round white straw hat on her head, "we are going out with Aunt Melita. You shall come, too, only I can't let you look about you all the time or the sun will melt your nose right off"

She and Carolina were soon ready for the road, and as Miss Melita took longer over her preparations there was time for a peep into the flower-garden which stretched from the sunny side of the old flint-built house to the edge of the churchyard. Undecimus Hill was a keen gardener, justly proud of his roses, his lilacs, and his night-scented stocks. His daughter had a little plot of her own where she grew mint, marjoram, lavender, balsam, and other sweet-smelling plants; and between that

plot and the stables was a comfortable-looking vegetable-garden.

Delia had never seen an old-fashioned country garden before, and she was delighted.

"Carolina," she whispered, "isn't it beautiful? Wouldn't you like one of those pretty white rosebuds to stick in your frock? I wish I could have one for my hat! But we mustn't gather any without leave, you know."

"Where are you, child?" called Miss Melita's voice from the foot of the stairs.

"Here, ma'am," and Delia, with Carolina in her arms, came running into the house.

"La, my love, don't be so violent, pray; when I was a little girl I was not allowed to gallop like a young colt in a meadow. Come now, and you will get your first glimpse of Little Hurst."

The village consisted of a rambling street with two-storeyed cottages on either side. Some of these were, like the Rectory, built of shining grey-and-blue flints; others were of pinkish-white plaster with dark oak beams. Most were thatched, but several had roofs of overlapping ruddy-brown tiles. Tiny strips of garden in front were gay with flowers, and thus the rector was always glad to see, for he was generous in giving seeds and cuttings to his parishioners. At the top of the street was an iron pump, under a small wooden canopy, and there two women were drawing water. Delia thought that they looked rather quaint with their flapping sunbonnets and striped cotton dresses. One wore wooden clogs, and the other low-heeled black leather shoes, over coarse, grey woisted stockings. As Miss Melita approached they set down their wooden buckets and curtsied.

"Good day, Marian, good day, Jane," said that lady, graciously. "This is my niece, Miss Delia, from London."

"That would be the Major's little lady?" cried Marian, with an admiring glance. "And a purty little lady she be!"

"And when is the Major coming back from 'Meucky, Miss Melita?" asked Jane. "'Tis many a long day he's been in them parts."

"My brother is serving his king and country, Jane, and must not hope to enjoy much ease at home," returned Miss Melita, grandly, as she swept on her way.

A short way farther on she paused and pointed to the

beautiful Norman church, round which the rooks were cawing with all their might.

"That, child, is grandpapa's church—a monstrous old building, and not in the least genteel. Some people nowadays would have us think that such things are much to be admired—ruins are vastly fashionable, 'tis said—but for my part I prefer a decent red brick with white stone pillars—and inside some carving and gilding in the classical style. And lots of hand-some red cushions with tassels to 'em."

"Has grandpapa no cushion to sit on in church?"

"Lawks, child, of course he has. But he does not sit with the congregation. His place is in the pulpit, or in his stall in the chancel. And, of course, we have cushions in our family pew—like the fine red cushions in the Duchess of Portland's chapel in London. You have been there, have you not, my love?"

"We go every Sunday—or *nearly* every Sunday," said Delia, feeling once more a twinge of homesickness.

"To be sure you do, my dear. All our family attend worship in that elegant building when in town."

"Shall we go to grandpapa's church next Sunday, ma'am?"

"Not next Sunday, my love. Grandpapa will be riding over to another village, ten miles away, to read morning prayers, and preach and baptize some infants. The Sunday after next this church will be opened, and we shall all attend."

"Has grandpapa *two* churches?" asked Delia, who imagined from her aunt's words that these must be the rector's personal possessions.

"To be sure he has, child, and a small chapel at Jevingham, over towards the sea. It means a great deal of work for grandpapa. He has to preach at a different place for three Sundays out of every four. And sometimes during the week there may be a funeral or a wedding at one of them. And yet there are some people who complain that the clergy do too little."

Delia listened with only one ear. The subject did not interest her. And she was too young to understand the point of view of the people mentioned by her aunt—earnest people, led by John Wesley, who were shocked to see the parish churches of England standing locked and empty from week to week while the clergy hunted, fished, farmed their land,

and thought they were doing their duty if they held a service once or twice a month.

"Do you see those chimneys peeping through the chestnut-trees yonder?" asked Miss Melita. "That is the Manor House. Sir Humphrey Gildredge is the Squire. His lady is a most genteel, elegant person. They have a little daughter of about your age and a boy who is at school at Eton."

"Oh," said Delia, interested, "where Stephen is going one day?"

"Yes, my love—and where your papa and grandpapa received their schooling also. And Mr Fox, if I mistake not."

The park surrounding the Manor was girdled with a low flint wall and planted with sturdy old oak-trees, among which clumps of beeches made an occasional patch of paler green. As Miss Melita and her niece approached the high, wrought-iron gates, these swung back and out came Daisy, with only Stephen on her back. The rector was on foot, leading her, and beside him walked a gentleman in a powdered tie-wig, a plum-coloured velvet suit braided with silver, delicate lace ruffles, and buckled shoes. His three-cornered hat instead of being on his head was tucked under his left arm.

When this beautiful personage caught sight of Miss Melita, he swept a low bow with his hat pressed to his white silk waistcoat, and she replied with a rustling curtsey and a sideways bend of her black silk hood.

"Is this little miss?" said the Squire, as Delia, obeying a glance from her aunt, made him a bob. "She is about the age of our Matilda. Will you not bring her to drink tea with my lady and Matilda this afternoon, Miss Melita?"

"You are vastly kind, Sir Humphrey—we shall be charmed,"

"And if this young horseman comes too, no doubt he will find cherries and gooseberries in the kitchen-garden while the young ladies play with their baby-house indoors."

The Rector was mounting Daisy again, almost pushing his grandson off in the process.

"Uncommonly obliged to you, Squire," said he, puffing. "I swear I would not have bothered you about those plaguy young game-birds of yours had not my crops been suffering badly."

"Pray, my dear sir, do not confound me by speaking of bother—there is none, upon my life. Whither bound, ladies?"

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"To the village school, Sir Humphrey—to take some of my marjoram wine to Dame Stapley—and to see how the children are profiting by their lessons."

"Always full of good works," said the Squire, in a slow, affected voice. "Upon my life, Miss Melita, you put half the fine ladies in the county to shame."

Miss Melita, who liked to think of herself as a lady as fine as any, received this compliment with an unsmiling bow, and he saw that he had blundered.

"I will tell my lady to expect you and young master and miss about three o'clock," said he. "Till then, your most obedient!"

He turned back up the drive leading to his house, the rector ambled homeward, and Miss Melita, holding Delia's hand, entered the low-roofed cottage kitchen where some twenty boys and girls, from six to twelve years old, were sitting on three narrow, wooden benches. Throned in a high-backed chair, Dame Stapley, spectacles on nose, was mumbling over an aged and tattered spelling-book.

"C-a-t, cat," gabbled the pupils in chorus, "m-a-t, mat, b-a-t, bat——"

Then they saw the newcomer, and a sudden silence fell, broken only by the clucking of Dame Stapley's hens in the yard behind her cottage.

The old woman—for she was very old—peered round to discover the reason for the unwonted hush, and then rose and dropped a stiff, rheumatic curtsey, with the book still in her hand.



GENTLEMAN OF PERIOD

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

"Mercy me, it's Miss Melita," she quavered. "How do you find yourself, miss? And this is the Major's young lady—I hope I see you well, little miss."

"I have brought you some marjoram wine, as I promised," said Miss Melita. "I hope it will do you good."

"To be sure it will," declared the old dame, carefully placing the precious flask on the mantelshelf beside her clock, her brass candlestick, and her china spaniel-dog. "Marvellous good stuff it be, Miss Melita—marvellous good."

Miss Melita was eyeing the children keenly.

"George's hair wants cutting," she proclaimed, "and Patty's apron is worn—and Robin's face is dirty—and you ought *all* to stand up when I come in."

"To be sure they ought," cried Dame Stapley, throwing down the spelling-book and snatching a bunch of twigs from the floor, with which she made some feeble slashes towards her pupils. "Up with you, you unmanneily bumpkins—have I not taught you a hundred times to be respectful to the quality?"

With a good deal of shuffling, the whole school got on to its feet and stood staring sheepishly at the visitors. The little girls were particularly interested in Delia and her doll, and those in the back row stood on tiptoe to see her better.

Miss Melita's critical eye was still roving high and low.

"La, Dame," said she. "Your floor is very far from neat—so many crumbs of bread I never saw. Why do you not have it swept? And where does the bread come from?"

Dame Stapley seemed confused by this question and pleaded the hem of her blue cotton apron between her withered fingers as she answered. "Well, miss—in a manner of speaking—it's the crumbs that the children let fall when they eat their slices of bread-and-cheese at noon. And as for having it all swept up—why, what would my poor hens do for their dinner, which they come and pick up here after the children have gone?"

Delia thought it would be great fun to see the hens doing this, and she noticed two of them peeping in at the open door as if they thought it was time to begin. Miss Melita, who kept hens herself, said no more about the untidiness of the floor.

"Where is Will, the ploughman's son?" asked she. "You told me he was one of your most promising scholars. I do not see him here."

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"Nay, miss, he bain't here neither," rejoined Dame Stapley, whose own education was very imperfect. "And sorry I am for it. A forward child he be, and quicker nor any of the rest. But his father keeps him at work, scaring birds and picking up stones and suchlike. And even if he do let him come now and again, the poor child is so sleepy with waking before dawn to get his work done first, he can't tell A from B half the time."

"Well," said Miss Melita, "a father ought to know best. And book-learning sometimes gives a quick boy ideas above his station. Will has many brothers and sisters. If he earns a penny or two, no doubt his mother is glad of it. Seven shillings a week doesn't go far with all those mouths to feed."

Delia wondered whether Will were the boy whom she had seen from her window that morning and decided that, in his place, she would rather be out of doors, waving a rattle to frighten crows away, than puzzling over a spelling-book in this stuffy room.

Miss Melita now decided that lessons had been interrupted long enough, and with a few gracious words to Dame Stapley and a nod to the children she led Delia away—and back to the Rectory they went.

The whole family met shortly afterwards over what was called 'a cold collation'—tongue and ham and chicken, bread-and-butter, and fruit. The rector drank ale—brewed from his own grain—the ladies had wine-and-water, and the children, milk.

"Have you ever tasted syllabub, child?" asked Miss Melita.

Delia shook her head.

"You shall taste one when the cows are milked to-morrow—it is vastly delicious, but it must be made with the freshest of fresh milk. You never have such delights in London, my dear!"

"Our milk doesn't come from cows in London," said Delia. "It comes out of big, shining brass cans. A girl carries them round, and there is a wooden yoke across her shoulders, with a milk-can hanging from each end."

"No doubt," chuckled the rector, "and the brass can is the mother of the Golden Calf!"

Miss Melita tittered, but as Delia had not yet been told the story of the Golden Calf from the thirty-second chapter of Exodus, she wondered what the joke could be.

When the time came to get ready for the visit to the Manor

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there was, in the view of Delia and Stephen, quite an unnecessary amount of fuss. Miss Melita changed into a dress of pale violet silk with Brussels lace ruffles; she made Delia put on the best frock she had brought with her—an embroidered white muslin—and insisted on clasping round her neck a string of coral beads which had been hers when



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she was a child. Stephen, though his pale blue jacket was the best he had got with him, was hustled into another—of Lincoln green—because a spot of butter had fallen on the front of the blue one.

Jonah, the Rectory donkey, was saddled with an old saddle which had hung in the harness-room since Melita and her brother were children, so that Delia and Stephen could ride sitting back to back. They set off rather slowly, because Miss Melita did not wish to arrive flushed and untidy.

Little Hurst Manor was not a very old house. It had been built by Sir Hum-

phrey's father about thirty years before, in what was called the Palladian style, with a row of pillars along the front. Miss Melita, who believed in improving the minds of the young, explained this to her niece and nephew, and also told them that an Italian architect, Palladio by name, had introduced that kind of building.

"And vastly genteel it is," she added. "Very different from the monstrous old house, all gables and ivy, which stood there before and was visited by Queen Elizabeth."

When they reached the front door, a pale green one with a great brass knocker in the shape of a human hand holding a ring, Miss Melita lifted the children down from Jonah's back and patted and tweaked their hair and their clothes to make

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them look spruce and neat. A solemn butler in a white wig and a scarlet coat ushered them through the large hall, paved with black-and-white flagstones, and into the drawing-room, where a lady and a little girl rose to greet them.

Delia saw at once that Lady Gildredge had the same ideas about hairdressing as her own mamma, and there could not have been a more marvellous head-dress in London than this which now appeared in far-off Sussex—an erection of greyish-white tow more than two feet high, over which the powdered hair was brushed upwards to be held on the summit by a garland of ribbons, plumes, and ears of silver corn, twined in and out among large rolls of curls. When Delia observed that the little daughter of the house also had a fashionable head-dress she felt rather ashamed of her own unpowdered and loose-flowing locks.

"My dear Miss Melita," exclaimed the lady, flopping down among her flowered brocade skirts in a deep curtsy. "Enchanted, I give you my word!"

"So good of your ladyship," murmured Miss Melita, executing a similar movement. "Permit me to present my niece and nephew—Delia and Stephen." Like well-brought-up children, the small visitors curtsied and bowed, while Matilda curtsied back very solemnly.

"Matilda," commanded her mother, "take your new friends up to the nursery to play. Nurse will give you tea—and later you may go in the garden, but do not sit in the sun. We shall amuse ourselves vastly better without them," she added, turning to Miss Melita, "and they without us! I am pining for a little elegant conversation—Sir Humphrey is away nearly all day—and in the evening he is tired out and sits nodding in his chair when I try to converse with him. Vastly vexing, my dear."

Delia was rather sorry to leave the drawing-room. The walls were panelled with lovely Chinese paper, full of dragons and pagodas and funny little people; there were walnut-wood cabinets with glass doors through which could be seen all sorts of pretty, curious little objects—fans, snuff-boxes, tiny figures in pale-tinted porcelain. Stephen, on the other hand, was glad to find himself in the huge, low-ceilinged nursery on the top of the house, where there was a somewhat battered rocking-horse which he immediately asked leave to mount.

"Pray do," said Matilda, in a prim, grown-up voice. "It

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is my brother's, but he never rides it now. I beg you will amuse yourself with it as long as you please. Would you, miss, like to see my baby-house?"

"Indeed I should."

The two little girls were soon busy with the house, and Delia's cries of admiration and delight brought to Matilda's face a friendly smile quite different from the simper with which she had at first received her.

"Oh," exclaimed Delia. "I never saw anything so fine! What a beautiful kitchen—with all those pots and pans and kettles—and the dresser with the little tiny plates and jugs. Is that the cook there, in the blue spotted gown?"

"Yes, and do you see the cat lying on the hearth? And that's the best bedroom—my nurse made the bed-curtains and coverlet out of a piece of one of my old silk gowns, and look—there is a washstand with a basin and jug and everything—and a little bath-tub—and a towel-rail with towels."

"Oh, it is lovely," breathed Delia. "Mine at home is a poor thing—only four rooms—no kitchen—and cotton curtains on the beds. Your dolls have a large family. Three—four—five babies in the nursery!"

"I mean them to have twelve," said Matilda, firmly, "six boys and six girls. Mamma is giving me four more for my birthday next month—and I hope for not less than three at Christmas. All the boys are going to be soldiers or sailors—and all the girls are going to be married when they grow up and have lovely houses of their own."

"Oh," murmured Delia. "Six baby-houses will be a great many."

"I shan't have six. I shall be grown-up before they are."

Delia found all this a little hard to follow, but Miss Matilda was—as Miss Melita would have said—so 'vastly genteel' that the younger child was ashamed to confess that she did not quite understand.

Presently the old nurse came up to the nursery, followed by a bewigged footman carrying a tea-tray. Stephen, who had been perfectly happy on the rocking-horse, climbed down, and all the children gathered round the table. The teacups and saucers had fascinating pictures and little printed mottoes on them, but the tea was no stronger than that Miss Melita had poured out at the Rectory breakfast-table that morning.

During tea the little girls talked about London, which

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Matilda often visited with her mamma, while the small boy munched steadily, and the old, white-bonneted nurse kept an eye on all of them. About half an hour later the footman appeared again, to say that Miss and Master Hill were to come downstairs. "Alack," cried Matilda, "there will be no time to go out into the garden after all!"

In the hall Miss Melita was waiting for them, drawing on her gloves and talking to Lady Gildredge.

"Enchanted, I give you my word," said her ladyship. "Sir Humphrey was inspired—positively inspired. I am only sorry you must go so early."

"We are expected at home," answered Miss Melita. "And we have already stayed a prodigious long time."

Stephen said nothing. But he remembered that the Squire had spoken of cherries and gooseberries in the garden, and he felt that it was very hard that he should be cheated out of them.

"I am vastly obliged to your ladyship," added Miss Melita, "and so, I am sure, are my niece and nephew."

"They must come again—Matilda will be enchanted to have a little playmate. Will you not, Matilda?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am—if you please."

The little girls smiled at each other, and then Delia was swept off by her aunt. The footman suddenly appeared from nowhere to lift the small boy and girl on to the donkey's saddle, and, in reply to Stephen's whispered wonder whether 'poor Jonah had had any tea,' remarked that the under-gloom had taken heed to that.

As they made their way homeward through the village, the field-labourers were returning from work, and a smell of boiled bacon was in the air.

"I should like to go into one of those pretty thatched cottages," said Delia. "They are so small—like toys—and those that are covered with roses and honeysuckle would do for fairies to live in."

"By no means must you enter such a place," cried Miss Melita, hastily. "There is often fever in the smaller cottages—some of them are damp and unwholesome. What would your mamma say if you caught some illness while you are here?"

The rector and Mrs Hill were waiting with interest to hear how the afternoon had passed, but of course it was

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Miss Melita who had most to tell them. Then a discussion arose as to whether Delia and Stephen were to stay up to supper. The rector was inclined to think that they might, but his wife ruled otherwise.

"Some bread-and-milk," said she, "will do them more good than roast veal and cherry-tart. And neither of *my* children was ever allowed to sit up and eat with their elders. Let Betty take them away and put them to bed."

So rosy-cheeked Betty, the Rectory maid-of-all-work, led them off, fed them with bowls of sweet milk and white bread, and finally tucked them into bed—Stephen in his grandfather's dressing-room, among the black silk gowns, the painted tin wig-boxes, and the rows of boots and shoes; Delia in her pretty pink-and-white room where Carolina was waiting for her. Stephen was feeling a little sad because he had missed both the cherries at the Manor and the cherry-tart at home; but he consoled himself with the reflection that he had ridden on three different animals that day—a cob, a donkey, and a rocking-horse.



XIII

MISS TIPTON'S BONNET

A.D. 1853

THE fog had lifted during the night, and though the sky was dull and the air raw, the horrible yellow blanket that had covered everything for the past three days was now gone. With a clatter of hoofs and a rattle of cans the early milk-carts were moving through the streets of London by the light of the gas-lamps, which had not been extinguished since the fog began. Smoke climbed out of the chimneys, and houses were full of the smell of scorched paper and burning wood as fires were lit.

Miss Lavinia Tipton was not allowed the luxury of a fire in her bedroom, and she shivered in the plum-coloured flannel dressing-gown as she stood combing her hair by her one and only mirror. It was not a very nice mirror, for there were brown speckles all down one side; but Miss Tipton did not complain. The lot of a governess was seldom a pleasant one, and she had at least the comfort of two pupils to whom she was attached. Not like her unfortunate sister Sophia, who had charge of three perfectly terrible children, spoilt and unruly and wild.

Miss Tipton's chest-of-drawers was of pale yellow birch-wood. The cover was of white crochet, and on it were arranged her china pin-tray with the coloured picture of Windsor Castle, her ivory brush and comb—a present from her little pupils—her prayer book, and her ring-stand in the shape of a small twig of white-and-gold earthenware. Miss Tipton possessed only one ring; it had been her father's, and was set with a bloodstone, with his initials engraved on it. She hung it carefully on the stand every night before she said her prayers and got into bed. Flanking the pin-tray was a box of what was called 'Tunbridge Wells ware,' made of tiny chips of different-coloured woods. This held Miss Tipton's collar-studs, her cameo brooch, and her onyx locket.

In the dull light of two candles—there was no gas in the bedrooms on the top floor—the room did not look very cheerful. The curtains were of chintz which had been washed so often that the pattern of posies and patriots had almost faded away. The floor was covered with a Brussels carpet, violent in colour and hard beneath the foot. The furniture was of birchwood, with white china handles on the drawers and the doors. The ware on the marble-topped washstand had a design of chocolate-brown roses and pale grey convolvulus. On the walls were several quaint old prints of the previous century, banished to the upper bedrooms because hopelessly out of date. One showed Britannia brandishing her trident against a stormy sky and holding a medallion of William Pitt in the other hand; one showed a lady in a plumed hat giving money to a small boy with a hudy-gurdy and a monkey; one was a farmyard scene, with two pigs and a shaggy white pony.

From a cardboard box in her top drawer Miss Tipton took a curious-looking object wrapped in deep blue paper. It seemed like a sort of bun made of greyish-brown horsehair, and she pinned it firmly to the back of her head before winding her own hair round it. Over each ear she arranged a tuft of long ringlets, and a band of black velvet ribbon held the whole head-dress in place.

Miss Tipton's fingers were cold. Fanny the housemaid had, indeed, brought her a small can of hot water to wash with, but the warmth it had given to her thin fingers had now passed off, and she had great difficulty in fastening the stud of her plain linen neckband. Her dress was of chestnut brown merino, with a moderately large crinoline. Governesses were not expected to follow the fashions, though cooks and housemaids often did. Fanny's crinoline was much wider than Miss Tipton's, and Cook's was so huge that her apron sometimes got scorched as she stood by the kitchen-stove stirring the contents of one of her big iron saucepans.

Miss Tipton picked up the shabby black prayer book which had been her mother's and hastily read the Psalms for that morning, her lips moving in time with the words. Then she fixed the purple ribbon marker one day farther forward and restored the book to its place beside the Tunbridge Wells box. Miss Tipton was now ready to face the world.

Meanwhile in a larger room one floor below Emma, the

little girls' former nursemaid and now their principal attendant, was helping them to dress. A fire burned—though not yet very steadily—in the barred grate, it shone on the polished steel fire-irons and fender, and sent cheerful flickers up and down the crimson repp window-curtains. The wan flicker of a gas-jet in a white globe fell on the round, shallow bath in which Emma had just tubbed her charges. On the thick bath-mat stood a brown water-can, but the water in it had been tepid, not comfortably hot.

The full names of the two little girls were Julia Elizabeth and Jane Amelia Leigh, but they were usually known as Juley and Janey. The elder was eleven and the younger nine years old, and they were always dressed as exactly alike as if they had been twins. This did not mean that they were very like each other. Juley was slight, fair, and rather quiet; Janey was dark, dimpled, and gay.

At this moment they were standing before the fire in their tucked white cambric petticoats which Emma was buttoning down the back. They wore white cotton stockings, and their cambric trousers, edged with crisply goffered frills, reached almost to their ankles.

"Tis a bitter sharp morning," said Emma, as she fastened the last button of Janey's petticoat. "Maybe you'd best wear your spencers."

"Oh, do let us wear our spencers, Emma," pleaded Juley. "Our elbows get *so* cold."

Emma brought from the tall mahogany wardrobe two full-skirted, short-sleeved dresses of green-and-yellow plaid; then she fetched from the chest-of-drawers two jackets of chocolate-brown merino, into which the children were glad to thrust their goose-fleshy little arms. Even in the depth of winter, short sleeves and low-cut bodices were the rule.

"There," said Emma, "*now* you won't freeze. But think of all the poor little children that haven't got any nice warm clothes."

"I don't like to think of them," protested Janey. "It makes me miserable."

"I'd rather think of the little black children we are collecting pennies for," added Juley. "They live in a hot climate, and never feel cold."

"Well," said Emma, pushing the crop-comb into Janey's thick dark hair, "hot climates may be all very well for black

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folk that know no better. But give me England and white faces round me, *I say*."

"I am glad the fog is gone," remarked Juley. "Now Augustus and Maria will be able to come to tea with us."

"But we shall have to go for a walk in the Gardens," murmured Janey, who would rather have stayed cosily by the fire with her kitten on her lap and a story-book in her hand.

"Run along now to Miss Tipton, like good young ladies," commanded Emma. "Schoolroom breakfast will be just about ready now."

Miss Tipton was waiting for the little girls, and when they entered she guiltily withdrew her feet from the cut brass fender on which she had been warming them—a thing she often told them no lady should do.

"Good morning, my dears," said she. "Is it not delightful that the fog has cleared away?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Tipton," answered Julie and Janey with one voice.

The kitten came and rubbed itself, purring loudly, against Janey's legs, and she was just about to stoop down and pick it up when the governess stopped her.

"My love, I beg not. After lessons, my love, pray."

Here the kitten darted under Miss Tipton's long skirt, and began to dig its claws—not at all fiercely—into her white-cotton-clad shins. The poor lady hopped anxiously from one foot to another, afraid of treading on the lively little creature and even more afraid of lifting up her skirt and showing her ankles.

"Call him, Juley—call him, Janey—oh, I believe he is climbing up my——" she was too prim to say 'petticoat' and said 'flounce' instead.

"Puss, puss," chanted Juley; "Timmy, Timmy," chirped Janey. Timmy poked out his head and uttered a questioning *miaow*.

"You may pick him up, my love," said Miss Tipton, still hopping. "In the circumstances I think you may. But let Fanny take him away to the kitchen for the present."

Fanny had just set down the brightly painted tin tray with the tea-pot, hot-water jug, and toast-rack, and was watching the little scene with an amused though respectful face.

"There he is, the treasure," cried Janey, snatching her pet neatly from between the toes of Miss Tipton's elastic-sided

boots "Do ask Cook to give him a saucer of milk, won't you, Fanny, please?"

"And maybe a bit of fish from the master's breakfast too," said the good-natured Fanny, tucking the kitten under her arm and rustling out of the room with a loud swish of her starched print skirt.

Miss Tipton murmured grace, in a voice imitated from that of the clergyman whom she most admired, and breakfast began. The tea was very black and strong in the pot—that was how Miss Tipton preferred it—but the little girls got three-fourths of hot water and milk to one-fourth of tea. They had bread-and-butter, one egg each, and a modest spoonful of marmalade. The toast was for their governess, who had won the cook's good will by helping her to write a letter to her brother in Australia, and had been rewarded with small treats ever since.

"Now, my dears," said Miss Tipton, when the meal was over, table-napkins had been neatly folded, and knives and forks laid side-by-side in the centre of each plate, "as soon as Fanny has cleared away we will begin our studies. The use of the globes. Writing. A portion of Scripture. Three pages of questions. And three French irregular verbs of the fourth conjugation."

"Yes, Miss Tipton," answered two polite little voices.

Then Janey crossed over to the window and peered down into the still grey and gloomy street.

The Leighs lived in a large, quiet square on the north side of Kensington Gardens, and Mr Leigh, who was a barrister, went to and from the Temple every day. At one time he had, as the saying went, 'kept his carriage,' but the expenses of educating his sons—he had three, away at school and older than his daughters—and some unexpected losses of fortune had made the expense too great, and he, like several of his neighbours, patronized the omnibus which plied between Bayswater and St Paul's Cathedral. These vehicles carried twenty-four passengers, twelve inside and twelve out; they were painted chocolate-brown and drawn by two rather badly groomed and underfed-looking horses.

As Janey peered down, she saw the top of papa's tall, stove-pipe hat emerge from beneath the porch, and she watched him as he turned sharply to the left and walked with a measured step towards the Gardens. He was wearing a kind of over-

coat called a 'surtout,' of deep blue cloth, buttoned up to the throat, and trousers, strapped neatly below his shining elastic-sided boots, of a grey material known as 'kerseymere' To his small daughters papa was an awe-inspiring personage, before whom they stood mute and motionless when he patted them on the head and asked in a deep voice whether they were good girls.

The schoolroom fire was now blazing brightly, and the brass lamp with the round white shade, which was standing in the centre of the red baize tablecloth, threw a pale beam upon the pitch-pine bookcase full of instructive books, the two glossy globes, celestial and terrestrial, the steel engravings, in vivid yellow frames, of Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, the *Dying Stag*, and the *Colosseum by Moonlight*.

"Come, Janey, my love," said Miss Tipton, placing her forefinger on the North Pole, "it is time to begin. Come, Juley."

They took up their positions on either side of the globe, and Miss Tipton called upon Juley to find the continent of Asia and name the principal countries of which it was composed. Beneath the child's hand the globe revolved smoothly, and she was easily able to point to India and China, Persia, Arabia, and Russia-in-Asia. She did not do so well, however, when it came to naming the rivers and mountains, and Miss Tipton professed to be sad as well as shocked when she heard the Nile mentioned as an Asiatic river.

Then Janey's turn came, and she was given the continent of America, North and South, to describe. As Miss Tipton herself knew very little about far-off countries, she could not make the geography lesson more interesting by telling her pupils about the people, the plants, and the animals to be found there. But she was always glad when she saw an opportunity to mention the Great Exhibition which had been held in Hyde Park two years before.

"You will recollect, my loves," said she, "that at the Great Exhibition we saw some elegant and magnificent products of Asiatic art and American industry. Can you recollect an example, Juley?"

Juley reflected for a moment.

"There was some beautiful cloth-of-gold from Ceylon. And a table inlaid with fifty different sorts of wood—something like your little box, Miss Tipton. And a huge umbrella of silver cloth, with crystal beads."

MISS TIPTON'S BONNET

"Very true, my love. And you, Janey—can you recollect anything? Come, it is only two years since."

"I can remember a Canadian canoe made of birch bark," said Janey, after a pause, "and some big machines for reaping corn. I think these came from America. And there were some bales of cotton, too."

That concluded the geography lesson. Miss Tipton then proceeded to set each child a copy, in her beautiful copperplate handwriting, and, as was her kindly custom, she allowed them to choose what they would like the sentence to be. Juley, who was devoted to her brothers, chose:

Frederick, Adolphus, and George will soon return from school.

"That is well chosen, my love," remarked the governess, as she ruled the lines on the paper. "You are not as proficient in the forming of capital letters as I could desire, and I beg that you will give careful attention to the F, the A, and the G."

For her copy Janey asked to be allowed to write:

Timmy is a pretty little kitten.

"But that would only be six words, my dear—three words fewer than Juley's. Try to think of three more words. And I beg, my love, that you will not frown and bite your finger while you are thinking. It is a very ungraceful habit."

Janey removed her finger from her mouth and said, "May I write—

Timmy is the prettiest little kitten in all London?"

"No, Janey, you may not. I have already pointed out to you, my love, that boasting does not become a Christian gentlewoman. And as you are a trifle inclined to be too sure of your own opinion, I will set you a copy in these more polite and modest terms:

I think Timmy is a very pretty little kitten.

With this Janey had to be content, but as she bent over her task she whispered to herself, "I don't think he is—I *know* he is." Fortunately Miss Tipton did not hear. She was too busy turning the leaves of the large, brass-clasped Bible and choosing a suitable chapter for her pupils to read aloud in alternate verses. Her choice fell upon the Parable of the Sower, upon which her favourite curate had preached a

sermon the previous Sunday evening. As the little girls did not go to evensong with her, they had not heard the sermon, and when the reading was finished Miss Tipton proceeded to repeat as much as she could remember. It had not been a short sermon, and she remembered so much of it that the three pages of questions had to be reduced to one, and the four irregular verbs to three; otherwise there would not have been time before luncheon for that "walk in the Gardens which she secretly disliked—in winter—as heartily as Janey did.

The questions covered a variety of subjects, and it is doubtful whether Miss Tipton herself could have answered them without the book in her hand, if it had not been the same book from which she herself had learned the same questions forty years before, when the Prince Regent was ruling in the place of the old blind king his father, and before Queen Victoria was born.

Solemnly she read aloud:

"What was the origin of the figure of Britannia?"

It was Juley who had to give the answer, and she started off gaily: "The Romans, who recorded all events on medals, cast it to—to——" here she stumbled, and Miss Tipton had to prompt her, "To signalize, my love—that means to mark in a very special way. Continue."

"To signalize their conquests over our island."

"Has it not been preserved," read the governess, not raising her eyes from the page but turning her head towards Janey, "as testifying their high opinion of us?"

Janey was ready with her reply, which contained only one difficult word.

"Yes, the warlike nation of Britain is shown by the female's accoutrements. She sits upon a rock or a globe, and the waves of her island home beat upon her feet."

"Very good, my love, and very true. You have seen Britannia on the coinage—and I have often shown you that old-fashioned picture of her in my room upstairs."

"I like the picture with the pigs and the pony best," admitted Janey, who was an animal-lover.

"And now," said Miss Tipton, stretching out her hand for the French grammar, "I will trouble you both to repeat the verbs 'to sew,' 'to say,' and 'to write,' in all their tenses. To what conjugation do they belong, my dears?"

"The fourth, Miss Tipton."

MISS TIPTON'S BONNET

"State the infinitive of each before proceeding to repeat all three."

"*Condre, dire, écrire*," said Juley and Janey with one voice.

It must be confessed that their French accent was not correct. How could it be, when they were copying poor Miss Tipton, who had learned what little French she knew from a rather indifferent English teacher? But a governess at £16 a year could not be expected to be a highly accomplished person, and most parents would have agreed with Mr and Mrs Leigh that it would be a waste of money to employ a more expensive instructress for girls. Nobody, they would have said, wanted their daughters to be learned. It was important that they should be ladylike; that they should play the pianoforte and—if possible—sing; that they should know how to make fruit out of tinted wax and flowers out of coloured feathers; and that they should have some dim ideas about history, ancient and modern, a faint notion of geography, and enough arithmetic with which to keep household accounts when, in course of time, they married and had houses of their own.

Mr Tennyson's poem, *The Princess*, in which he described a university where students and professors were all women, and where the more profound sciences were studied and discussed, had seemed to people like Mr and Mrs Leigh an absurd and rather dangerous imaginative work.

Poor Miss Tipton, who was an admirer of Mr Tennyson, had read *The Princess* and had found it both enchanting and depressing. What would she do, what would thousands of poor ladies like her do, if parents began to expect governesses to teach algebra and astronomy and Greek? And it seemed that here and there some parents were beginning to have such ideas.

"That will do, my dears," said Miss Tipton, closing the French grammar. "You will now get ready for a walk in the Gardens."

Leaving the children to be dressed by Emma, the governess climbed up to her chilly little room. There she changed her flat, elastic-sided boots for a more substantial pair, donned a bonnet of black chip-straw trimmed with bows of purple velvet, and a pelisse of rather shabby black plush edged with a sort of brown-and-white feather trimming called 'grebe.' She had a muff to match, into which she was glad to tuck her

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

cold fingers, not well protected by cheap gloves of grey cotton stuff.

Juley and Janey were now hooked and buttoned into their warm coats trimmed with bands of thick velvet. They wore bonnets of ruched white silk, with loops and bows of green ribbon in front and behind, and their neat little boots had patent-leather tips.

As they followed Miss Tipton 'downstairs, they heard a murmur of voices from behind the drawing-room door. A lady was paying a morning call on Mrs Leigh, and they were partaking of refreshments in the form of plum-cake and sherry wine.

Outside the weather was harsh and raw, and poor Miss Tipton's long and large nose was soon blue with cold. Very few people were about. In the square itself they met only a policeman, in his high, shiny top-hat, closely buttoned blue coat, and trousers strapped under his boots like Mr Leigh's.

"Oh," said Janey, "there's a Peeler!"

"A *what*, my love?"

"A Peeler, Miss Tipton. That's what Frederick always calls them."

"Janey, my love, I have already pointed out to you that the language used by schoolboys is not always suitable for the lips of a little girl. It was Sir Robert Peel who instituted this excellent body of men in the year 1829, and for that reason they are sometimes—jokingly—called 'Peelers.' But I cannot allow *you* to call them so, my love."

They had now reached the Bayswater Road, along which a stream of vehicles was rattling towards the City. None of the wheels had any rubber tyres, and as they rolled over the uneven cobblestones the din was deafening. There were four-wheeled cabs driven by red-faced old drivers in coats with three or four capes; there were omnibuses and drays, and occasionally a carriage-and-pair with a white-wigged coachman and footman on the box. Mingling with these were the costers' carts, drawn by long-suffering donkeys; and on the other side of the road there was a glimpse of a few gentlemen, in top-hats and high velvet collars, taking a canter in the Park to get an appetite for luncheon.

"May we walk as far as the Basin, please?" asked Janey, who loved to see the ducks in what is now called the Round Pond.

MISS TIPTON'S BONNET

"I think, my dear, that it is a little too far on such an inclement morning. We will cross the road, and walk in the Gardens as far as Orme Square, where there is the image of the Roman eagle on a column. Then I think we shall have sacrificed sufficiently to the goddess Hygeia. Of what was she the pagan goddess, my loves?"



VICTORIAN GOVERNESS AND CHILDREN

"The goddess of health," answered Janey, promptly.

Both little girls were well acquainted with Miss Tipton's habit of firing off such questions, taken from the lesson-book, and usually dealing with a subject which they had had to learn about a week before. This was her way of impressing on their youthful minds the immense variety of information which the book contained.

Deep in her heart Miss Tipton considered that the goddess Hygeia would have been better pleased if she and her pupils had remained snugly at home on such a disagreeable day, but she dared not say so. Mrs Leigh did not believe in coddling

children. They must go out if the weather was even moderately good. Only thick fog, driving snow, or heavy rain were regarded as too bad. So the poor governess had to venture forth, shivering and reluctant, and secretly envying the cosy jackets of the little girls.

"I do hope," said Juley, "that Augustus and Maria will come. Mademoiselle doesn't like the cold."

"If their mamma says that they are to come, Mademoiselle will have to bring them," Janey pointed out.

"Ah," returned Juley, sagely, "but Lady Lothbury pays a lot of attention to what Mademoiselle says."

Miss Tipton sighed. It would be pleasant, she felt, to be employed by a lady who paid a lot of attention to what her governess said. But then, of course, Mademoiselle was a brilliant person, who played the harp as well as the pianoforte, got her bonnets from Paris, and was able to give Lady Lothbury good advice about French fashions.

Though the little girls did not feel the cold so severely as Miss Tipton did, they were not at all sorry when she gave the word to turn homeward. Emma pounced on them when they arrived, stood over them while they washed their hands, and treated their hair to a few sharp tugs with the comb. Then they followed Miss Tipton downstairs to the dining-room, as the sound of a deep bronze gong pealed through the house.

It was a large, gloomy room looking out on the square, but according to the ideas of 1833 it was exceedingly handsome. The furniture was of mahogany, huge and shining. The gas-chandelier over the table was hung with lustres that seemed like twinkling icicles. A bronze clock on the red marble mantelpiece was supported on each side by figures in ancient Roman armour.

Mrs Leigh had not yet appeared, and everyone stood politely waiting for her. There was a big tureen on the sideboard, by which it was clear that soup was to be the first course. Janey wrinkled up her nose when she saw it—and smelt it. She was not fond of soup.

Presently a soft rustling of silk announced the coming of mamma. She was a rather languid-looking lady with fair hair—like Juley's—arranged in masses of curls under a dainty little patch of a lace cap, from which dangled bunches of narrow ribbon. Her ear-rings, locket, and bracelets were of

massive gold set with red stones called 'carbuncles,' and her pale grey dress was trimmed with lace ruffles which peeped out beneath the cuffs of her green velvet spencer.

Each small daughter received a kiss on the forehead, and Miss Tipton answered with a deep curtsy the condescending nod with which Mrs Leigh favoured her. Then they all took their places, and mamma murmured a short grace.

"You took the children out this morning, did you not, Miss Tipton?" she asked, as the parlourmaid set a steaming plate before her.

"Oh, yes, ma'am. We had a pleasant promenade. The fog has quite lifted."

"Lady Lothbury's children are coming this afternoon," said Mrs Leigh, "and Mademoiselle, too. If I return in time from drinking tea with my sister, Mrs Ashton, I will make a point of looking in. Mademoiselle is an exceedingly agreeable, well-informed person."

"Yes, indeed, ma'am." It was on the tip of Miss Tipton's tongue to add "for a foreigner and a Papist," but she checked herself. Such a remark might have seemed uncharitable; and she did not want to show her anxiety lest Mrs Leigh should think of engaging some other Mademoiselle to fill her place.

"Janey, you are not eating your soup," said mamma, reproachfully. "Has Miss Tipton not told you that a little girl should always thankfully eat whatever is set before her?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am, I have—many times."

Looking rather sullen but not daring to protest, Janey dipped her heavy silver spoon into the fast-cooling soup.

Mamma sipped her claret—the others drank plain water—and then took a spoonful from the plate before her.

"Such excellent soup," said she, "so nourishing! I cannot understand what children are coming to. They expect to be allowed to do only as they please. It was never so when I was young. Or when Miss Tipton was young either, I am sure"—she added, rather unkindly reminding that unfortunate lady that she was some ten years her senior.

"No, indeed, ma'am. In my youth children knew that it was their duty to obey. They *did* obey. Everyone would have been shocked and grieved if they had done otherwise."

"There, my dears, you hear what Miss Tipton says," murmured mamma, approvingly.

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

Miss Tipton felt encouraged and took a sip of water with an air of enjoyment.

Soup was followed by a boiled chicken, of which mamma got most of the breast, the children a wing each, and Miss Tipton one drumstick. There were also plenty of vegetables, plainly cooked. The next course was a suet pudding studded with a few small raisins; of this mamma took little, but everyone else had plenty.



VICTORIAN SMALL GIRL

"You will tell Emma to dress Juley and Janey in their embroidered muslin frocks before their guests arrive, Miss Tipton," said mamma, as she gave the signal to rise. "And they had better wear their new sashes. They can come down to dessert this evening. Their papa mentioned this morning that he would like them to come."

There was still more than an hour and a half before Mademoiselle and her young charges were expected, and this time Juley and Janey spent practising on the tinkly old piano in the schoolroom. They did scales and exercises turn about, and then sat down side-by-side on two stools shaped like hour-glasses and upholstered in crimson repp, to study a duet called *The Grand March of the Nations*, composed in honour of the Great Exhibition. The piano had a maple-wood case, and the high back was shaped like a harp. Behind the music-rack was a fretwork panel through which fluted green silk could be seen. Juley, who had a good ear for music, played quite nicely, but Janey had to be rebuked for thumping and for failing to keep time. Both were glad when Miss Tipton gave the word to stop—and when Emma poked her head round the door and told them to come upstairs and get dressed. Janey's plea that Timmy should be allowed to come up from the kitchen to meet Maria and Augustus was rejected. Perhaps poor Miss Tipton was afraid that he would dash under her crinoline again.

'Getting dressed' was quite an undertaking. It meant changing into white lace socks and satin sandals, into frilly

MISS TIPTON'S BONNET

frocks of fine muslin beautifully embroidered by Miss Tipton, and broad sashes of stiff silk ribbon—Juley's blue-and-white plaid, Janey's deep pink-and-white. Meanwhile Miss Tipton had put on her best afternoon gown of grey moiré silk, with a little tucker of Honiton lace clasped with her cameo brooch. Hardly had she made sure that Juley and Janey were ready to receive their guests than the front-door-bell pealed through the house. A few moments later the parlourmaid announced "Mamzelle, and Miss and Master Lothbury."

A large and plump lady, dark and sallow, wearing a bright purple pelisse over a dress of the gayest crimson, burst into the room like a whirlwind, seized Miss Tipton in her arms, and kissed her loudly on either cheek.

"Ma chère Mees Teeptonn, ah, quel plaisir de vous revoir! Et ces deux petites personnes si charmantes, si bien élevées!"

Miss Tipton returned the embrace, but said nothing. She knew that in another minute Mademoiselle, who liked few things better than to show off her English, would cease to chatter in French. Juley and Janey in the meantime had been welcoming Maria, a pleasant-looking though not exactly pretty little girl dressed very like themselves, but with a scarlet hooded cloak over her white frock, and Augustus, a sturdy boy of five wearing a brown cloth garment, braided like a Hussar's tunic, and carrying in his hand a blue velvet cap with a peak in front.

"If you will come up to my room with me, Mademoiselle," said Miss Tipton, "Juley and Janey will take our little friends to their own room, where Emma will help them to change their shoes."

"Voilà une bonne idée!" cried Mademoiselle. *"Tenez, mes enfants—prenez votre sac à souliers."*

Maria took charge of the shoe-bag, which was adorned with wool-work in violent colours; and while she and her



VICTORIAN SMALL BOY

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

brother were conducted one storey higher up, the two governesses climbed yet another and so found themselves together in Miss Tipton's modest apartment.

"Ah, my dear," said Mademoiselle, breaking into English as she flung her bonnet of green quilted velvet on to the narrow bed. "All this long time that I do not see my dear *Mees Tiptonn*, do I forget her? A thousand times no. Behold!"

From her large beaded reticule she extracted a small white paper parcel. Miss Tipton's eyes shone. It was seldom indeed that anyone gave her a present except at Christmas—and then she did not receive many.

"*Miladi Lottbéri*, she has given me the flowers from a bonnet of last summer—two beautiful posies of lilac and lilies-of-the-valley—but more beautiful than nature, for the lilac is red and the lilies are blue. I need them not. Have I not many, many posies of every colour? I say to myself—'Clothilde,' I say, 'these must be for *Mees Tiptonn*! *Chère Mees*, do me the favour to produce your bonnet of Sunday."

With some hesitation Miss Tipton extracted it from the bandbox where it lived—a plain and dull bonnet it was, but, she felt, suited to her station in life.

"It is very kind of you, Mademoiselle, and the flowers are really beautiful—but do you think they are quite the sort of thing I ought to wear? I am—I am no longer a young girl, my love. And governesses are expected to dress in a quiet, modest manner."

"Bah!" said Mademoiselle, laughing good-naturedly. "*Et moi donc?* Am I a young girl? You must not be afraid. Mrs Leigh will say nothing if you tell her they come from me. I am a favourite in that quarter, *hein?*"

"But Lady Lothbury—what would *she* say? Would she not be annoyed?"

"Far from it. I asked her. I said, 'Madame, thanks to you I overflow with flowers. I am the goddess *Flora en personne*. Do you permit that I offer these to *Mees Tiptonn*? And she permits.'"

"Well," murmured Miss Tipton, "in that case——"

Before she could say more Mademoiselle had produced a housewife, with needles and cotton, and was sewing the posies, one on each side of the bonnet, with quick, firm fingers.

MISS TIPTON'S BONNET

"I wonder if I shall ever *dare* to appear in it," said the Englishwoman.

Mademoiselle winked one of her large black eyes in a way which Miss Tipton considered 'very foreign and unladylike,' and, after tucking the beautified bonnet back into its box, swept her downstairs.

They found the children playing ludo very quietly, and contentedly. Augustus was not quite old enough to understand the rules of the game, so it was agreed that Maria should help him. Mademoiselle, who was of a lively disposition, waited till they had finished and then suggested that they should play Dumb Crambo. This they did, with much laughter. Poor Miss Tipton wondered once or twice what Mrs Leigh would say if she heard those boisterous sounds. Mademoiselle was so *very* foreign. She had no dignity at all, but galloped and pranced, strutted and hopped, and seemed to enjoy herself as much as the children.

The last word that had to be acted was 'a word to rhyme with *force*.' Miss Tipton guessed correctly that it was 'horse,' but she could not be persuaded to put any vigour into her imitation of the noble animal. When Janey ventured to beg that she should trot 'just a little' she answered mildly that she would prefer to be a horse standing still.

"But, Miss Tipton," argued Janey, "if you stand still, how will anybody know that you are a horse?"

The arrival of Fanny with the tea-tray made it unnecessary for Miss Tipton to answer.

It was an excellent tea which Cook had sent up—much more exciting than the everyday schoolroom fare of thick bread-and-butter. There were those fascinating custard tartlets called Maids-of-Honour; there was plum-cake and there was sponge-cake, and there were lovely slices of hot buttered toast. Miss Tipton's faded face was lit up with happy and hospitable smiles as she sat at the top of the table and played the hostess, keeping an eye on her pupils to see that they did not eat too much, and on Mademoiselle's to make sure that they had enough. Augustus spoke seldom, but he did full justice to the plum-cake.

When Mrs Leigh came sailing in half-an-hour later she found the whole party playing Happy Families. Mademoiselle leaped up, dropping Master Potts the Painter's Son in her excitement, and swept a deep curtsy.

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

"How do you do, Mademoiselle? I am glad to see you," said Mrs Leigh, graciously. "And how do you do, Maria and Augustus?"

The small boy and girl, who had politely risen, murmured something in small, shy voices, and then their hostess, with a wave of her hand, called Mademoiselle aside.

"Have you any news about winter bonnets from Paris?" she asked, with interest.

"*En effet*, Madame—my sister writes that they will have little pipings of velvet in two colours—and tufts of ostich plumes over each ear. And the nightcaps—*ravissants*—tucked muslin threaded with satin ribbon!"

"Charming—I must get Miss Tipton to make some for me."

"Ah, *à propos*, Madame—Miladi Lottbéri—she permits me to offer to the excellent *Mees Teeptonn* two posies from a bonnet of last summer. I hope Madame approves? Madame has such perfect taste—Madame must have observed that the bonnets of *Mees* are far from gay?"

Mrs Leigh bent her head in what she thought was a stately manner.

"Certainly, Mademoiselle. Poor Miss Tipton is so very dowdy. And I am sure you would not wish her to wear anything unladylike. Has your sister seen the new Empress of the French yet?"

"Yes, Madame. Ah, what beauty! A swan, not a woman! So everyone says." Somebody had once told Mrs Leigh that she resembled the Empress Eugénie, and she had tried ever since to be like a swan herself. Once more she bent her head with affected grace.

"I hear," she remarked, "that Lady Lothbury is going to dress Augustus in Scottish costume—like the little Prince of Wales. But I see she has not yet done so."

"No, Madame—the tailor is an assassin, a bandit. He promised to send home the tartan kilt, the buckles, and the brooches, yesterday. But they did not come."

"Poor Augustus," murmured Mrs Leigh, glancing at him pityingly.

Mademoiselle did not think it necessary to mention that Augustus objected strongly to being rigged up like a Highlander, and had even gone so far as to say that he did not see why he, being English, should wear that sort of dress. Queen

MISS TIPTON'S BONNET

Victoria's passion for everything connected with Scotland was spreading among her subjects in all directions.

"Well, my dears," said Mrs Leigh, turning to the children, "I do not wish to interrupt your enjoyment any longer. Good-bye, Maria—good-bye, Augustus—you will soon be a real little Scotsman now—and pray, Maria, give my love to your dear mamma."

No sooner was she gone than Mademoiselle hurled herself joyfully upon Miss Tipton.

"*Voilà*, my dear—all is rose-pink for you now—Madame knows about the flowers—she approves—you will go to church on Sunday looking so gay that *Monsieur le pasteur* will be able to see your bonnet from the pulpit!"

The idea drew a feeble squeak of alarm from Miss Tipton; but she was secretly grateful to this masterful Frenchwoman, so different from her timid self.

The children were now playing with a box of coloured wooden bricks, but some disagreements soon arose, as the little girls wanted to build a house and Augustus was anxious to build a fort. Juley and Janey brought out some tiny stuffed dolls with china heads whom they intended to occupy the still-unbuilt house, but the small boy produced from the pocket of his braided tunic a neat bronze cannon, only three inches long.

"There," said he, defiantly, "when I have made my fort, I will mount my gun on it, and I will shoot all your silly little dolls quite dead."

At this dreadful threat the three little girls uttered cries of dismay, and Mademoiselle rushed across the room to learn the reason.

"Augustus," she exclaimed. "You are a bandit—you are an assassin—I blush for you—give me that gun—who said you could bring it here? You know that your pocket is meant for your handkerchief, not for guns. Give it to me——"

And Mademoiselle tucked the toy away in her beaded bag, paying no heed to the scowl upon the face of Augustus, who turned his back upon the table where the other children had already begun to build a house.

"He will improve when he goes to school," murmured Miss Tipton, consolingly. "George Leigh was not much more than his age when I came here first—and he was very

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

rough and boisterous. But now, since he has gone to that very strict boarding-school in Kent you could not wish for a quieter little boy. He is much improved."

"Ah," said Mademoiselle, shaking her head. "That is not always good. Perhaps they break his spirit, *le pauvre Georges*."

"Oh, I hope not. I must say it is quite a pleasure to take him and Juley out in the holidays. Janey, alas, is rather a romp. And I am afraid Fiederick and Adolphus encourage her. They are at Westminster School, you know, and come home once a month."

"And *le pauvre petit Georges*? When does he come?"

"Only at the usual school holidays. And I must say he is less mischievous than he was."

"And you call that an improvement!" cried Mademoiselle, quite forgetting her remarks about Augustus. "Me, I like to see a boy full of pranks."

"Well, my dear, you seem to have a better way with boys than I have. I fear I am not always as firm as I ought to be. And Mrs Leigh does not like a great deal of noise. No doubt George will recover his spirits when he joins his brothers next year."

Janey left her sister and Maria to play with the tiny dolls while she tried to remove the frown from the forehead of Augustus.

"Are your papa and mamma going to take you to the pantomime at Christmas?" she asked him.

"Don't like pantomimes," growled Augustus. "Don't like fairies—silly fairies. Worse than Highlanders."

Janey was quite shocked.

"Oh, Augustus—didn't you like the transformation scene last year—the Coral Grove—and the Silver Palace?"

"No, I didn't. I did when I was quite a little boy. But I'm nearly six now. I like to go to Astley's—where they have chariot-races and elephants and fireworks."

"Astley's—that's on the other side of the Thames—papa took the boys there last holidays. Mamma thought Juley and I might be frightened—but Adolphus said there were lots of girls there. Has Maria been to see it?"

Augustus nodded, with a provokingly superior smile.

"Yes—but every time there was a bang she screamed—and she cried when one of the elephants lay down and pretended to die."

MISS TIPTON'S BONNET

"Lady Lothbury's carriage is waiting," announced Emma, peeping round the door.

Then the bustle of departure began. Emma helped the visitors to change their blue kid house-shoes for elastic-sided black boots, knotted white crochet scarves snugly round their throats, and buttoned them into their warm wraps, while Juley and Janey circled round. The two governesses soon returned from Miss Tipton's room, and everyone streamed down to the entrance hall where, by the pale glow of a double gas-jet, good-byes were said and kisses exchanged. Augustus would gladly have avoided the last part of the ceremony, but Mademoiselle informed him that he was a savage monster, and must certainly kiss Miss Tipton, Juley, and Janey on both cheeks, as she and Maria had done.

"How quiet the schoolroom seems!" remarked Janey, a few minutes later, when she and Juley had begun to put the coloured bricks back into their box.

"It always does after a tea-party," returned her sister, in a rather forlorn voice.

"Now, my loves," urged Miss Tipton, hovering over them, "pay do not crush your frocks—you are to go down to dessert this evening, you know."

The children received this reminder without any sign of joy. Going down to dessert was always an ordeal, even though the crystalized fruits were delicious.

Dinner in the London of 1853 was usually served at half-past six, and even as Miss Tipton spoke, the gong boomed loudly two floors below. About three-quarters-of-an-hour later Fanny came in, bearing the governess's modest supper of cold meat, watercress, and bread and cheese on a tray, and announcing that it was time for Miss Juley and Miss Janey to go down to the dining-room.

Rather timidly, and holding each other's hands, the little girls made their way to that solemn spot. The stairs were only dimly lit, and their gloomy walls, covered in paper with a design imitating tawny marble veined with dark blue, did not add to the cheerfulness of the scene. Juley and Janey tiptoed across the hall, past the oak stand where hung papa's stove-pipe hat and his plaid-lined cape, and so into the room where he and mamma were sitting at either end of the table. The white linen cloth had been removed before dessert, and

the crystal and silver were reflected in a surface as brilliant as a mirror.

Papa set down his wine-glass as his two daughters came in. His dark hair and the broad black satin facings on his coat gleamed almost as brightly as the mahogany, and his high collar and stiffly starched shirt-frill were as snowy white as the table-napkin across his knees. The only touch of colour about him was his low-cut, double-breasted waistcoat of deep blue brocaded velvet, adorned with four silver buttons. Mamma considered papa a very handsome, impressive looking man, and perhaps in secret he was of the same opinion.

"Come here, Julia and Jane," he said, in a deep voice. "Come and sit one on either side of papa. That is right. And have we been good little girls to-day?"

"Yes, papa," answered Juley, who, being the elder, was expected to reply.

"Have we done our lessons well, and practised the piano-forte, and improved in our Berlin wool-work?"

"Please, papa, we did not have any time for Berlin wool-work this afternoon. Maria and Augustus Lothbury came to tea with us."

"Ah—but I think Miss Tipton ought so to have planned your tasks that your needle was not neglected. What do you say, Mrs Leigh?"

"No doubt you are right, my dear. I will speak to Miss Tipton about it. Perhaps they could make up for it to-morrow."

Juley and Janey concealed their alarm. They did not like doing Berlin wool-work and considered that too much time was spent upon it already.

"Please, Mamma," ventured Janey, "Mrs Symington comes to-morrow to give us our lesson in making wax fruit. We are to make strawberries and peaches, instead of apples and grapes."

"It is a pity," remarked mamma to papa, "that Miss Tipton cannot give instruction in wax-fruit and feather-work. But she is such a biddable creature, and does so much fine sewing for me, that I hesitate to make a change."

"Ahem, my love, ahem——" Mr Leigh glanced meaningly from right to left, as a reminder that such matters should not be discussed before the young, and mamma pushed a silver dish full of crystallized cherries towards Juley.

MISS TIPTON'S BONNET

"Take a cherry, child," said she, "and give one to your sister. You may have some raisins and almonds after that."

"Thank you, mamma," said two polite small voices.

Papa looked earnestly at his elder daughter, who quailed beneath his eye. She did not know that he was merely wondering what to say to her next. Though a kind-hearted man, he was awkward in dealing with the young, he believed that their minds were in constant need of improvement, and that it was his duty as a parent to be stiff and solemn in their company.

Presently he poured a thimbleful of port-wine into the beautifully cut wine-glass standing by each child's plate. This made them feel grown-up, even though they did not particularly like the taste, and it also meant that the ordeal was nearing its end. When the boys were at home it was even more alarming, for papa then insisted upon asking them questions out of the Latin grammar, and to him who was not ready with the correct answer neither port-wine nor almonds and raisins were given.

"Your brothers will return from school next week," said Mrs Leigh, "and papa has a treat in store for you all. What do you imagine it will be?"

"The pantomime?" guessed Juley.

"Astley's?" ventured Janey

Mr Leigh stroked his small, glossy side-whiskers rather gravely.

"Such amusements are all very well in their way," he said, "but instruction should sometimes be blended with pleasure. I am taking you to see the Great Diorama of the Holy Land."

"Pray, papa, what is that?"

"The Diorama, Jane, consists of coloured scenes illuminated by gas, and the spectacle is accompanied by vocal music of a suitably serious kind. Now, my dears, it is time for bed. Say good night to mamma and papa."

So well had Miss Tipton done her work, neither of the children said—or showed—that to them the Great Diorama (accompanied by serious music) sounded much less exciting than a pantomime. Having been patted on the head by each parent, they trotted quietly away. Half an hour later Emma tucked them into their dimity-draped double bed and put out the light.

Miss Tipton sat up by the schoolroom fire, reading a

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

sentimental story called *The Dean's Daughter* or *The Days We Live In*, until the fire died down, and the temperature became uncomfortably low. The coal-scuttle was empty, and she could not ask Fanny to re-fill it so late in the evening, so she closed her book and crept up to her room.

After she had undressed and said her prayers, and when she was just going to get into bed, she impulsively plucked off her nightcap, and, standing before the speckled mirror in her long white nightgown, she tried on, with a happy smile, the dull bonnet which Mademoiselle's kindness had suddenly made so gay.

XIV

THE 'REAL HOUSE'

A.D. 1902

A BREEZE from the sea was flapping the curtains to and fro and making the ball-fringe that edged them waggle merrily. A good many of the little balls were missing, and Phyllis Harvey, lying in bed and counting them lazily, used to wonder how long it would be before they all dropped off. Or were pulled off—except those at the top. For she could *not* stand and look out of the window without tugging at those small blobs of hard cotton.

There was quite a lot of ball-fringe in the house: cotton in the bedrooms, woollen in the dining-room, silk in the drawing-room. But it was only in her bedroom that Phyllis got a chance to play with it. If her mother saw her touching it in any of the other rooms she always said, "Don't do that, Phyl dear. Remember this is not our own house. Think of poor Mrs Partridge."

Neither Phyllis nor her brother Hugh was likely to forget that the narrow house in a row of narrow houses on the sea-front at Sandbourne was not their own. Their father was in the Navy, and not since they could remember had they had a settled home. They had lived in furnished lodgings or hired villas in Malta and other foreign places, they had spent a rather dull year in London with their grandmother; but always they looked forward to the time when Captain Harvey would get a job ashore, so that they could have what they called a 'real house' to live in. And pets. You couldn't keep pets comfortably in lodgings or hired villas. And if



FRILLY LAMPSHADE

you had to move, you might have to leave them behind. So Phyllis and Hugh longed for the news that their father's sea-going days were over. Their mother secretly shared this longing, but she seldom said so, for she did not want the children to be more impatient than they were already.

Mrs. Partridge's house had been taken for a year, which would be up in August. It was now early in June. And, though they liked living at Sandbourne, both Phyllis and Hugh hoped heartily that the house would not be taken for another year. It was poky; it was crammed with furniture which they had to be careful not to damage; it had no garden—only a small patch of chalky turf bordered on three sides by marigolds. In Malta they had had a glorious garden, with huge bushes of white roses and an old well with a carved marble rim.

Both children understood why their mother had brought them to this place. Captain Harvey was on the China station, and would not be home again for nearly another year. And at Sandbourne there was a very good school, quite a famous prep school, for Hugh, and a choice of schools for Phyllis. So there they were, surrounded, as their mother said, by ball-fringe and marigolds.

Phyllis sat up on her bed of bright green-stained wood and looked at the flapping pink cretonne curtains, which let in a gleam of sunlight every time they flapped. There was a small brass clock on the mantelpiece, between a framed photograph of a battleship and a yellow pottery cat with an absurdly long neck, and it said 7.20.

"I wonder if Hugh is out of the bath yet," said Phyllis, half aloud. "I bet he's grabbed all the hot water."

She jumped up, pushed her feet into dark blue felt slippers lined with scarlet, tugged on her red flannel dressing-gown over her rather plain white cambric nightdress, and pattered downstairs to the next landing, where the bathroom door proved to be locked.

"Hurry up, Hugh," called Phyllis, "and go easy on the hot water."

"It's not hot this morning, anyhow," said her brother's voice.

"Oh, dear, the wind must be the wrong way," murmured Phyllis, who knew from experience that that was the explana-

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tion offered by the cook whenever the kitchen stove failed in its duty. How nice to be grown-up, and have your bath at night as mother did—when there would be lots of hot water whichever way the wind blew!

She went upstairs again, pausing to say good morning to Florence, the house-parlourmaid, who had begun to sweep the shabby stair-carpet. Phyllis secretly longed for a frock of the same stuff as Florence's morning print, covered with tiny purple ferns on a white background; but she did not envy the stiff white linen collar fastened close under the chin with a prim black bow.

"Lovely day, Miss Phyllis," remarked Florence

"Yes, isn't it," agreed Phyllis. "It seems almost a pity that we're going to the concert on the pier this afternoon, instead of picnicking."

"Oh, but it's a nice concert-party, miss," said Florence, pausing with a dustpan in one hand and a brush in the other. "Ever so nice. I went last night. There's a little girl that dances—and they are showing some of them moving pictures—the king and queen and all—wonderful!"

Consoled for the imaginary picnic, Phyllis, hearing the key turn in the bathroom door, dashed downstairs again, nearly knocking Hugh over as he came out with his red hair on end, his towel over his arm, and the cord of his dressing-gown trailing behind him.

Mrs Partridge's bathroom was not an inviting spot. The walls were covered with an ugly, tawny paper with a sprawling pattern of masks and scrolls in dingy dark brown. The bath was enclosed in a large mahogany case, with a pale patch at the edge where dripping people had been climbing out for the last thirty years. There was a rusty streak under the brass taps, and a dark circle on the bottom where the enamel had worn off. Phyllis and Hugh dreamed of a very different bath and bathroom if ever they should have that 'real house' of their own. A gay blue-and-white paper, like Dutch tiles, and a big porcelain bath, and, of course, a kitchen chimney which was never worried by any wind that blew—those were the things of which they dreamed.

Hugh had spoken truly. The water that morning was *not* hot. So Phyllis hurried over her bath and scampered upstairs, feeling rather chilled, to finish dressing. She had an almost new tin of purple pink carbohc tooth-powder, and it

amused her to make a little puddle in the centre with a wet toothbrush, even though this meant scattering powder into the wash-hand basin—an ugly one with a pattern of large fawn poppies.

On the top of the green chest of drawers were the little girl's hair-brush and clothes-brush of ebony, with a large silver 'P' on the back of each. Beside these was her greatest treasure, the little blue-enamelled watch which she had been given on her tenth birthday a few weeks before. It lived, with its brooch, in a velvet case lined with white satin, and when Phyllis wore it she fastened it like a medal to the left side of her frock.

Never a tidy child, she had been spoiled by foreign nursemaids who did not expect her to do anything for herself, and she had always had her stockings, shoes, hair-ribbons, and clean handkerchiefs laid out ready for her. When she first came to England grannie's old maid—who had been mother's maid when she was a girl—was almost as indulgent as the smiling Maltese Annunziata had been; but in Mrs Partridge's house there were only Cook and Florence; and the children, with a little help from their inexperienced mother, had to look more or less after themselves. The results were sometimes unlucky.

This morning, for example, in getting out clean brown stockings from the drawer, Phyllis took one with a narrow rib in it and one with a broad rib, and she did not discover her mistake till her suspenders were fastened. That meant delay. Then she saw that a button was missing from one of her boots and had to change into a pair of brown laced shoes. That meant more delay. And she snatched up the first hair-ribbon that came to her hand, tying it with one long loop and one short one, before she rattled downstairs.

The walls of Mrs Partridge's staircase were adorned with the stuffed heads of horned beasts shot by Major Partridge in India and Africa many years before. Mrs Harvey had had to promise to put a fresh piece of camphor on the nose of each animal from time to time, and Hugh always said that they looked as if they were waiting for you to say "On trust—paid for."

As Phyllis came down she saw her brother, all ready for school from his boots to his blazer, stroking his favourite, a springbok with a mild, melancholy eye.

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A rising smell of bacon hinted at breakfast. And they found their mother already in the gloomy, red-papered dining-room, opening the two or three letters which had come by the first post. She looked very fresh in a long navy blue serge skirt, a shirt-blouse of blue-and-white striped linen with a collar almost as high and as stiff as Florence's, and her auburn hair—darker than Hugh's—twisted into what was called a 'jug handle' at the top of her head. Her forehead was hidden by a neatly curled fringe.

"Any letter from father?" asked Phyllis, as she kissed her mother good morning.

"No, dear—letters from China come by the afternoon post. There is one from Aunt Hilda." She has got seats to see the Coronation procession."

"I wish we could see it," said Hugh. "Can't we, mother?"

"I am afraid not; the seats are too expensive. But we shall be able to see it in the moving pictures."

"You can't see things very well in the moving pictures," lamented Phyllis. "They flicker and jerk, and it looks all the time as if it were raining hard."

The entry of Florence with the teapot and the bacon and eggs put an end to the conversation, and the Harvey family, especially the younger part of it, were soon busy with breakfast.

"You must put on a clean hair-ribbon, Phyllis," said Mrs Harvey. "That one is very crumpled—and a pink ribbon doesn't go with a sailor-suit."

"I'm sorry," murmured Phyllis, "I know it doesn't. I took the first one I found."

"I do wish," sighed her mother, "that I could afford to keep a maid to look after you and Hugh—like our dear old Higgins, she wouldn't spoil you as Annunziata did, but she would keep you tidy. If we ever have a house of our own—"

"I'd rather have a dog than a maid," said Hugh.

His mother laughed.



SMALL GIRL

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

"Perhaps we could train the dog to bring Phyl the right hair-ribbon," she suggested, "and to fetch your gym shoes on Thursdays, Hugh, when you always forget them."

"If we had a parrot," cried Phyl, "we could teach it to say 'Have you a clean handkerchief, Hugh?'"

"Or 'Where's your lanyard, Phyl?'" retorted her brother.

"Yes, where *is* your lanyard, Phyl?" asked Mrs Harvey, looking more closely at her small daughter's white drill tunic. Hugh had been promoted last year from sailor suit to school blazer, but Phyllis was still dressed as nearly like an able-bodied seaman as she could be.

"Oh, bother, I've left it upstairs!"

"Get it before you go out," said her mother, "and a clean black hair-ribbon. Hugh, fetch your satchel. Nigel will be here in a few minutes."



SMALL BOY

Nigel was a school-fellow who called every morning to walk with Hugh to the large red brick building of St Damian's about half a mile away at the foot of the wide green downs. Phyllis secretly envied her brother for being a pupil in such a big school and wearing a cap, tie, and blazer of the school colours—green and yellow. For, after all, she had not been sent to any of the numerous girls' schools at Sandbourne. She 'did lessons' with Nigel's two sisters, who had an excellent governess, and though in many ways the plan worked quite well, she thought she would have felt more important if she, too, had sported school colours and could have gone out walking in a long crocodile.

The two whose governess Phyllis shared were the daughters of a doctor, and they lived in a house of many wonders. For one thing, it was lit by electric light instead of gas. Phyllis loved to switch the light on and off, and Hugh was always anxious to go and see the whizzing wheels of the dynamo which supplied the current. Very few people in Sandbourne lit their rooms by electricity, and those who did had to supply their own. Then there was also in the doctor's house that wonderful machine called a telephone, by which you could

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talk with a person many miles away—even as far as London. Dr Gray said that some day it might be possible to talk to a person in India or Australia; but that sounded like a fairy-tale.

Phyllis, having fetched her lanyard and changed her hair-ribbon, rammed on her sailor cap, bearing the name of her father's ship, slung her satchel over her shoulder, and set off. The sea-front was still deserted. Neither the donkeys nor the little goat-carts were lined up by the iron railings. A solitary cab was waiting patiently for anyone who might want to take a drive, but the wooden bathing-machines were standing in a row on the shingle, and the three shaggy horses whose work it was to pull them into the sea and back again, were munching their nose-bags by the slimy green breakwater.

As the little girl trotted along, she was excited to hear a hooting and roaring sound behind her. It was a motor-car! She stopped to look at it as it passed at fifteen miles an hour, sending up clouds of dust. It was an open car, painted primrose-yellow, and all the four people in it were wearing padded goggles to protect their eyes. The two ladies of the party had bonnets of straw and silk, rather like poke-bonnets, with thin gauze veils over their faces.

The cabman hastily threw down his morning paper, descended from the box, and ran to his horse's head, for even that quiet and aged animal was apt to shy when one of the new-fangled vehicles went past.

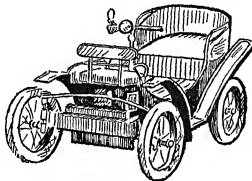
By this time so many small boys and girls were on their way to school that the sea-front was beginning to look quite gay. Most of the boys wore the St Damian's cap, but there were others of various colours. Some of the girls had straw hats with school hat-bands, but sailor suits and caps were popular, and so were pinafore-frocks of dark blue or brown serge with full-sleeved white blouses underneath. Scarlet berets were numerous. Only the smallest children wore socks; anything over six had neat brown stockings.

Dr Gray's house was about half a mile from the sea, in the old-fashioned part of Sandbourne, near the ancient, wind-battered church dating from the reign of King John. It stood in a shady garden, with a tennis-court and an orchard at the back. Phyllis and Hugh always supplied the 'real house' with a tennis-court and an orchard.

A CHILD'S DAY THROUGH THE AGES

This morning the little girl arrived in time to see the doctor's victoria waiting to take him on his rounds. She paused to pat the glossy chestnut in the shafts and to say 'good day' to Allison, the ruddy old coachman, who was sitting bolt upright in his chocolate-brown, silver-buttoned livery, and his rather rusty top-hat.

"Ah, little missy," said the coachman. "You won't be patting Bayard much oftener—nor Narcissus neither. The doctor's going to get one of them there motey-cars."



EARLY MOTOR-CAR

Phyllis heard this news with mixed feelings. She was very fond of both Dr Gray's horses; but on the other hand it would be lovely to go out sometimes in the 'motey-car'.

"What will happen to Bayard and Narcissus?" she asked, stroking Bayard's satiny nose.

"Doctor, he have been uncommon kind," said the coachman. "He did say as how I might learn to drive the motey-car. But I'm too old a dog to learn new tricks, missy. So I'm to have my two hosses. And I'm setting up a cab of me own."

"Oh," cried Phyllis, "that will be fun—I shall *still* be able to pat Bayard and Narcissus—and you will take us sometimes when we go to parties—or for picnics in the country, won't you, Allison?"

"And proud I shall be to do it," said the old coachman.

As Phyllis trotted up to the house she met Dr Gray coming

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out, and he swept off his shimmering top-hat as seriously as if she had been a grown-up person. He was a tall, keen-looking man with a neatly peaked grey beard, and Hugh always said he reminded him of the sailor in the tobacco advertisement. Like almost every other doctor of that time, he would not have dreamed of going to visit his patients in anything but the most formal garments: top-hat, black frock-coat, dark trousers with a narrow stripe, and black boots, usually buttoned ones. He wore a white piqué tie with a pearl pin in it—the gift of a grateful patient. Everyone in Sandbourne agreed that he was a very clever man, like his father, who had been a doctor in the same town when it was little more than a seaside village, before it became large and fashionable and busy.

Joan and Marjory were already sitting at the baize-covered table in the schoolroom, and Miss Mackinson, their governess, was taking from the book-shelves some of the books and atlases which would be needed that morning. The two little girls, nine and eleven years old, wore pale blue linen smocks. Joan's dark hair was cut short like a boy's, Marjory's was tied at one side in the American fashion which was then just coming in. Poor Joan had to wear spectacles and a gold plate on her front teeth, both of which she disliked very much, though her younger sister thought that the spectacles, anyhow, would be rather amusing, especially if perched on the tip of one's nose.

As for Miss Mackinson, she was a very different person from the meek, under-educated governess of fifty years before. She had been to Cheltenham and was a good mathematician and a sound scholar. She had written a small pamphlet on English composition which was used in a great many schools. Nobody would have dreamed of snubbing Miss Mackinson, still less of asking her to put tucks in their nightgowns. And her salary was so high that Dr Gray could not have afforded to pay it unless another parent had shared the expense. Though not tall, she had a commanding appearance in her grey tweed coat and skirt, with her dark hair twisted into a neat coil on the back of her head, and her pince-nez dangling from a thin, gold chain.

As it was a Saturday morning, lessons lasted only from 9.30 till 12, after which Miss Mackinson took her three pupils for a walk. Phyllis was quite as intelligent as the other two,

but she had been less regularly taught, owing to the roving life led by herself and Hugh. In Malta they had had a lively French governess; at granmè's they had had an elderly and grumpy Geiman one. Miss Mackinson found it necessary to start several subjects from the very beginning, especially English history, which she switched firmly back to the invasion of Britain by the Romans under Julius Cæsar, of which Phyllis had never even heard. This delighted Phyllis, because Hugh was at the same time tackling Cæsar's own account of his campaigns.

Thinking of her father on the China station she had begged to be allowed to draw the map of China, and she had wondered why Miss Mackinson had smiled a little grimly as she said, "When you have drawn every country in Europe, with all its rivers, mountains, and principal cities, you can occupy yourself with the Far East."

And now the time had come, and she was bending over a large sheet of mapping-paper, with the atlas propped on a stand before her, and the vast empire of China unfolded before her eyes. Phyllis dipped her tiny steel pen resolutely into the Indian ink, took her ruler, and began to sketch the main outlines of that huge country, dotted with so many queer-looking names, and streaked by such writhing rivers. Miss Mackinson informed her encouragingly that now that she had reached the Far East she must next do a map of Japan; and also that, though smaller than China, it was even more difficult to draw, on account of its deeply indented coastline.

The next lesson was Latin. Joan and Marjory were doing simple extracts from Tacitus and Horace, but Phyllis had got no further than that part of the Latin grammar where you decline the pronouns and do exercises on adjectives and nouns. Some of the exercises contained the words *navis*, a ship, and *nauta*, a sailor. Phyllis liked this. And she also thought it would be amusing to put a 'real house' into Latin and wrote *domus vera* on the back of a leaf in her exercise-book. That was something to tell Hugh; and he would probably know if she had got it right.

Finally, Miss Mackinson gave them a dictation from an article in *The Times* on the approaching coronation of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, for she believed in keeping her pupils in touch with the events of the day

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"Where would you children like to go for your walk this morning?" she asked, as she drove the long hat-pins into her stiff straw boater.

"May we go by the fire-station?" asked Marjory, as neither of the others spoke. "Perhaps they will be drilling—and we shall see the horses."

"Oh, yes, do let us," chimed in Phyllis and Joan.

"Very well—and we can come round by the old fort as we take Phyllis home."

The little Grays wore rush-straw hats, pleasantly shady but so wide that they would have blown away on the sea wind, if they had not been held by elastic under the chin. They also wore sandals, but not bare legs. People often said that Mrs Gray was "so artistic"; sometimes they added, "but so *very* modern, you know." There was no ball-fringe in her house; there were none of the small copper pots, holding wisps of ferns and supported by curly legs of wrought iron, which most people liked to possess; no rickety tables loaded with odds and ends. And though she had one of the tall brass lamps which were then seen in almost every drawing-room in England, the shade was of plain pleated silk, not flounced with masses of yellow or pink lace. In her heart of hearts Phyllis thought that Mrs Gray's drawing-room was rather bleak and would have been improved by some knick-knacks and a few frills; but Hugh said that he hoped there would be one like it in the 'real house,' so that a chap wouldn't be knocking over silly little tables and ornaments all the while.

As Miss Mackinson and her pupils drew near the fire-station, a gay jingling of many small bells told them that the fire-engine was coming out. It was drawn by two magnificent dapple-grey horses, called Daisy and Dolly, and the bells were fixed to their harness so that there was a great din as they galloped along. Everyone in Sandbourne knew Daisy and Dolly and had heard how intelligent they were, and that, if there were an alarm of fire, they went of their own accord and pushed their heads into their collars, which were kept hanging at the right height from the ground.

"Aren't they *lovely*!" exclaimed Marjory and Phyllis in one breath, as the beautiful creatures appeared with the glittering fire-engine behind them. They were followed by two other

horses, pulling the red-painted fire-escape, but though these were fine animals nobody paid so much attention to them—perhaps because they were brown instead of dapple-grey, and had fewer bells.

Miss Mackinson allowed the little girls to stand and watch while the two vehicles clattered up the street, the firemen meanwhile buckling on their belts just as if they were hurrying to a real fire, then she improved the occasion by asking for the names of a few famous horses in legend and history, such as Pegasus, Bucephalus, and Napoleon's charger, Marengo. Phyllis offered the name of the Derby winner of a few days before, but this was not well received, so she did not mention that she and Hugh and their mother and Florence and Cook had had a penny sweepstake on the race. Mrs Harvey took two tickets, so the prize—which the cook won—was sixpence.

Presently they turned towards the sea, and at the corner of a wide, tree-shaded road they found a group of three shabby-looking elderly men playing a trumpet, a trombone, and a clarinet. They all had drooping fair moustaches, and their instruments—unlike the brass-work of the fire-engine—were badly in need of polishing. The tune they played was "Good-bye my Bluebell, Farewell to you," which was very popular about that time; but they did not play it well, for the big trumpet, which went *POM-pom-pom*, made more noise than the trombone and the clarinet together and almost drowned the melody.

"Another German band," Joan remarked. "What a lot of them there are!"

"I wonder," said Marjory, "why you never see French bands or Swiss bands or Spanish bands."

"Or Swedish bands or Norwegian bands," said Joan, entering into the spirit of the thing.

"Or Chinese bands or Japanese bands," suggested Phyllis.

"Probably," said Miss Mackinson, "because all those people have something better to do. It is a mistake to encourage these German bands by giving them money. There are plenty of our own people who need it quite as much. And the same is true of the Italians who come over here with barrel-organs and concertinas."

"And monkeys," added Marjory.

As she spoke a large motor-car, honking fiercely, swerved

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round the corner and dashed past them, causing much alarm to a nice little pony drawing a greengrocer's cart.

"Father is going to get a motor-car soon," remarked Joan, importantly.

"I know," said Phyllis. "Allison told me this morning, when I was patting Bayard. Aren't you sorry, Joan?"

"I should be sorry if I didn't know that Bayard and Narcissus were to belong to Allison. He's sure to be kind to them. And we can take sugar in our pockets when we go down to the sea-front near the cab-rank and give them some."

"I'm sorry," announced Marjory. "I don't like motor-cars. But father says they have come to stay. He says we shall soon see more motor-cars than horses on the roads."

"I have no doubt that Dr Gray is perfectly right," said Miss Mackinson. "We may even see flying machines come into general use."

"Won't the birds be frightened, if they do?" asked Joan.

"Perhaps they will be cross," suggested Phyllis. "I should be cross, if I were a bird, and a lot of humans started flying about among the tops of the trees."

They had now reached the old round tower which had been built during the Napoleonic wars to help to defend the English coast against a possible invasion from the Continent, and at the same moment they saw a lot of small boys in the St Damian's colours coming out of the high, wrought-iron gates of the school.

"May we wait for Nigel and Hugh?" asked Joan.

"Not here," said Miss Mackinson. "We will walk slowly on, and they will overtake us."

Several of the boys knew the Grays, and there was such a raising of caps that it was almost like drill, as every time one boy raised his all the others in the same group had to raise theirs. This was the reason why Miss Mackinson decided not to stop. She would have felt like a general reviewing a regiment.

Very soon running footsteps overtook her and her charges, and Hugh and Nigel dashed up, rather out of breath and full of conversation.

"Are you coming to the concert on the pier, Nigel?" asked Phyllis.

"Not me. I'm playing for the school. We've got a match on with St Crispin's."

Near the terrace where Mrs Partridge's house stood they met Mrs Harvey, wheeling her bicycle, with a shopping-basket fixed to the handle-bars. She stopped for a few moments to talk to Miss Mackinson and the three Grays, and then drove her own two children into the house to wash their hands for lunch—a duty which Hugh, like most small boys, performed with extreme reluctance.

There was shepherd's pie for lunch.



LADY WITH BICYCLE

"Do shepherds eat this sort of pie?" asked Phyllis, eyeing her plate without much enthusiasm.

"Let's ask one, the next time we go up on the downs," suggested Hugh. "There is always a shepherd somewhere about."

When the two children had done justice to a golden-syrup tart, their mother told them to go and get ready, as the concert began at 2.30.

"Change into your blue frock and hat; you can put on your watch, if you like," she said to Phyllis. "And

you, Hugh, you must wear your grey suit and your straw."

The blue frock was really a white one sprinkled with blue flowers and girt with a blue silk ribbon. Wearing it meant changing into bronze-coloured silk stockings and pulling on white silk gloves which made queer, crinkly thills run up and down one's fingers, but Phyllis was consoled for all this trouble by the pleasure of wearing her watch, and also her best hat of white straw with a wreath of forget-me-nots. "I need not change my hair-ribbon," she said to herself, "I shall have my hat on all the time."

She went down to her mother's room and found her sitting in front of her mirror poking long silver hat-pins into a complicated hat draped with lace and trimmed with a pale green wing. Sandbourne was a fashionable place, where coats and skirts were not worn in the afternoon, and Mrs Harvey had changed into a long, fluttering dress of thin

silky stuff adorned with zigzag rows of narrow satin ribbon. Her pale grey 'dust coat' (as they were called in those more dusty days) lay across the brass bed. This was very brassy indeed, and all its little rails and knobs and brackets jingled if anyone crossed the room with a firm tread. On the mantelpiece were two heavy silver frames, one with a photograph of Captain Harvey in uniform, and the other with an early picture of Phyllis and Hugh, she in an immense floppy hat of white embroidery and he in a round straw one with a tuft of small feathers at one side. Phyllis used to wonder whether she had ever looked quite so stupid as that little girl, and Hugh was convinced that the beaming baby was not in the least like himself at *any* age.

Mrs Harvey was soon ready, and with her coat over her arm she went down to the hall where Hugh was waiting, straw hat in hand. There she paused to tilt up Phyllis's hat and peep at her hair-ribbon.

"Run upstairs, Phyl," she said, "and put on the ribbon that matches your sash, dear."

"Oh, must I, Mother? I shall have my hat on all the time, shan't I?"

"Perhaps not. You are growing so tall that you may block the view of someone sitting behind you if you keep your hat on."

Phyllis sped away, and Hugh, who prided himself on being nearly as tall as she, asked, "What will happen if I block someone's view, mother? I shall have taken off my hat, you know."

"I suppose *you* will have to take off your head," said Mrs Harvey, laughing.

The pier pavilion at Sandbourne had only recently been built, and its white paintwork was still spick and span. Mrs Harvey took three seats in the front row of the balcony, and her children, with sighs of excitement and delight, settled down to enjoy themselves. Such treats were rare. Too many were considered to be bad for the young.

While they were waiting for the curtain to go up, Phyl asked Hugh if *domus vera* were the correct Latin for 'a real house.' He wrinkled up his much-freckled nose as he answered solemnly, "*Domus* is all right, but I think *verus* instead of *vera*. That means 'true,' not 'real'."

"*Vrai* means 'real' as well as 'true' in French," said his

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sister, firmly, "so I bet I was right. Don't you remember how Mademoiselle used to talk about *vrai acajou* when she meant 'real mahogany'?"

"Oh, you children, with your 'real house'," murmured their mother. "As if Mrs Partridge's were not real—*dreadfully* real!"

"But you know what we mean, Mother dear," said Phyllis. "The house of our very own that we are going to have some day. We have always called it our 'real house'."

"I know, dear, I know. Hush—they are going to begin."

Just as the curtain—gaily painted with a scene on a Venetian canal—rolled up, a mild voice behind them said, "Oh, I wonder if the little girl would be kind enough to take off her hat? My little grandson cannot see very well." Phyllis hastily obliged, and Hugh looked round to discover whether there were anyone in the seat behind him; but it was empty.

The old gentleman with the grandson had bought a large box of chocolates, and he made the boy offer some to the two children in front. They glanced at their mother for permission, but the hall had been darkened and they could not see her face.

"Pray, madam, permit me," whispered the old gentleman.

"Thank you so much," whispered Mrs Harvey in reply; and she added hastily to Phyllis, "Take off your gloves first!"

So both children started the afternoon with chocolates in their mouths, Phyllis with a coffee cream and Hugh with a caramel.

The first item on the programme was a patriotic song, sung by a large lady with a shield in one hand, a silver trident in the other, and a dress made chiefly of Union Jacks. Phyllis thought she must be Britannia, but Hugh pointed out that you never saw Britannia in skirts up to her knees. "She would look silly," said he.

"She *does* look silly," retorted Phyllis, nodding her head towards the stage.

Then a man came on in a white smock, such as some of the old village men still wore, with leggings and a red handkerchief and a straw in his mouth, and sang a song saying how he had "minded the farm for foity-five year, and also the pigs in the sty." He did not get clapped so heartily as the large lady with the trident.

After the orchestra had played one or two tunes, mostly

waltzes and marches—Sousa's *Liberty Bell* was a great favourite—a red light was turned upon the stage, and a little girl not much bigger than Phyllis tripped on. She had an accordion-pleated skirt striped scarlet-and-white, a huge scarlet hat, and high-heeled scarlet shoes, and she did a dance called *The Cake Walk*. Mrs Harvey explained in a whisper that this was a dance invented by the negroes of America, and that the prize for the best performer was a large cake. Phyllis thought it was a rather awkward, ungraceful dance, but she was surprised to hear the old gentleman behind muttering indignantly that he wondered why anyone should want to see such stuff, and that it ought not to be allowed. Having been heartily clapped by everyone except the old gentleman, the little girl popped behind a painted canvas tree and immediately popped out again, without her striped skirt, and wearing an enormously wide frock of some soft, floating stuff. She then did quite a different sort of dance, in time to very slow music, while limelight of lovely, changing colours made her draperies look like the petals of various lily-shaped flowers.

"Ah," said the old gentleman approvingly, "now I call *that* charming."

There was a pause, during which the chocolate-box was handed round again; then a swarthy gentleman in evening dress stepped on to the stage and announced:

"Ladies and Gentlemen, the management will now have the pleasure of presenting an unrivalled display of the marvellous moving pictures, sometimes known as the Bioscope, which are the rage of London. These are not to be seen at any other place of entertainment in Sandbourne. They include lifelike glimpses of our king and queen, God bless them! Also views of Paris. Also a drama of a most exciting character. Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you."

He bowed and withdrew; the hall was darkened again. And on the white sheet stretched across the stage, grey and dim figures suddenly appeared, by a flickering light, and in a streaming shower of narrow black lines, while an unseen pianist pounded fiercely on his piano. The scenes in Paris came first. Phyllis and Hugh were amused at the open cabs, driven by fat coachmen in white top-hats; and they liked the Luxembourg Gardens, where little girls in plaid frocks and little boys with short socks and striped linen suits were playing

battledore-and-shuttlecock under the eye of quaint-looking nurses with big, frilly caps. But nothing was very clear.

The "drama of a most exciting character" proved to be a story about a faithful collie dog, which rescued a baby from a burning house. Phyllis was enchanted by the baby, but all Hugh's enthusiasm was for the dog. "We must have one just like him when we go to our 'real house'," he whispered to his mother.



LADY WITH TOQUE

A thrill of interest ran through the audience as it was proclaimed on the screen that they would next see their Majesties the King and Queen at Aldershot. In spite of the unsteady light and the cracks in the film, they were able to make out the broad, bearded figure of King Edward VII, his cocked hat fluttering with white plumes, and his gloved hand constantly raised in salute. Beside him was the graceful figure of Queen Alexandra, in a

small flowery toque, bowing with a beautiful movement of the head

"Nobody like her," muttered the old gentleman "Nobody to touch her—there's grace for you!"

It was only eighteen months since the death of Queen Victoria, but already she seemed very far away, and the nation and Empire had taken to their hearts her genial eldest son and his charming Danish queen. The shops were full of pictures of them, of their sailor son and his princess, and of *their* fair-haired children, one little girl and three little boys. When the old queen had died, in January, 1901, Phyllis and Hugh had been staying with grandmamma in London, and they could remember the gloomy tolling of the church bells and the sudden change of everyone into black clothes. Phyllis had pleaded hard for a black frock, but grandmamma, though she herself put on the deepest possible mourning, decided

that crape arm-bands were enough for a small boy and girl.

Now all that gloom was over. The South African war, which had maired the last years of the great queen's reign, had come to an end. And England, little guessing that the sudden serious illness of the king would cause the coronation first to be postponed and then shorn of much of its splendour, was busy adorning itself with flags and garlands.

The performance on the pier was wound up by a singer with a large red nose—an artificial one—and a very small hat. He sang a comic song, and it seemed that neither Mrs Harvey nor the old gentleman liked that song very much, for by the time the singer had started on the second verse they were both beginning to make preparations to go, and they would not let their young charges linger to listen to the third.



BATHING-MACHINE

Outside there was a fresh breeze blowing from the sea. The tide was in, the bathing-machines were once more drawn up on the shingle; and the tired horses were standing with drooping heads, grateful no doubt that their work of pulling those wooden huts on wheels in and out of the water was over for the day. The old gentleman raised his hat to Mrs Harvey and walked briskly away, dragging his grandson past the penny-in-the-slot machines which he evidently wanted to patronize. "He's at St Crispin's," thought Hugh, looking at the red school-cap.

"Well, did you enjoy it?" asked Mrs Harvey, as she followed more slowly, with a child clinging to either arm.

"Oh, yes, thank you," said Phyllis. "It was lovely."

"I liked that collie best," added Hugh.

"I liked seeing the King and Queen," declared his sister, loyally.

As they turned westward along the sea-front they met a middle-aged lady in widow's dress, her gown and mantle edged with deep crape, her peaked black bonnet draped with a long black veil both in front and behind. She had cuffs and a narrow collar of pleated white muslin, very crisp and neat.

Mrs Harvey stopped to speak to her, and when the short conversation was over, and the lady went on her way, she remarked to the children that that was Mrs Alford, whose husband, General Alford, had died of fever out in South Africa.

"Sailors don't die of fever, do they?" asked Phyllis, anxiously.

"Sometimes, dear—especially if their ship is in some foreign port where there is fever on shore."

Phyllis looked rather grave, not only because she was fond of her father, but also because she was afraid that if *he* should die her mother, Hugh, and herself would probably live with grannie in London, instead of having the 'real house' of their dreams.

When they reached Mrs Partridge's house the afternoon post had come in, and there was a fat letter with a Chinese stamp. Mrs Harvey took it up with her when she went to her room to shed her hat, cloak, and gloves, and the children meanwhile told Florence about the performance and compared impressions with her.

Florence was laying the tea. She had changed into a black serge afternoon dress, with long skirts sweeping the ground. Her big white apron was trimmed with tucks and embroidery, and from her white cap hung two broad streamers stiffly starched.

"What did you like best, Florence?" asked Phyllis.

"I think I liked the comic at the end, Miss Phyllis—he was a fair scream. But the red-white-and-blue lady was nice, too."

As Phyllis and Hugh were considered too young to dine with their mother, and as Mrs Harvey did not want to give Florence the extra work of bringing up a supper-tray for them, high tea was the order of the day, with eggs and sardines and potted meat. Hardly had all these things been placed on the table than Mrs Harvey appeared, looking unusually excited, with several rustling sheets of thin foreign paper in her hand.

"A letter from father," cried Hugh. "I saw the stamp. May I have the stamp? I want to swop it with Nigel for a blue Trinidad."

"Of course you can have the stamp. But what do you think? Can you guess? I'll give you three guesses, children——"

THE 'REAL HOUSE'

"Oh," breathed Phyllis. "Is it—is father——"

"He's coming home," chanted Hugh, dancing round the table. "He's coming home for good—we're going to have our 'real house'!"

For a moment it seemed as if his mother was going to jump up and join in the dance. But she controlled herself, took her chair at the head of the table, and began pouring out tea with her right hand, while in the left she still clasped the important letter.

"Yes," she said, "it is true. When father comes home next year he will not go to sea again. He has been appointed to a post at Portsmouth."

"And our house—our 'real house'?" Oh, mother, we *shall* have it now, shan't we?"

Mrs Harvey nodded happily.

"Yes, Phyl. Father tells me quite a lot about it in his letter. It is a house which belongs to the appointment. A nice old house, he says. With a garden, too."

"And a tennis-court?"

She glanced again at the letter.

"Yes, a tennis-court. And a donkey to draw the lawnmower. One of the naval ratings will look after the donkey, father says."

"I hope he won't holystone the poor donkey as they do to the decks," said Phyl.

"Or try to rub him down with metal polish, as they do to the brass-work," added Hugh.

Their mother was deep in the letter again.

"Listen, children. Father says that we needn't be afraid of not having lots of hot water for the bath, whichever way the wind blows. If anything goes wrong with the boiler, a naval artificer will come up from the royal dockyard and put it right."

Neither Phyllis nor Hugh could eat much that evening, and they would both have liked to sit up late talking about the wonderful news. Mrs Harvey, however, was firm. They must be in bed at 7.30, their usual bedtime. But she promised to come up and see them after dinner.

It was nearly nine when she kept her word. She went first to Hugh's room, a real boy's room, with his stamp-album, his books by Henty and Ballantyne and Jules Verne, and his framed photograph of the Sussex county eleven on a shelf

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beside his small, iron bed. In spite of his excitement, he was already asleep. His mother dropped a kiss on to his rumpled red hair and departed to Phyllis's room. As she had half expected, her daughter was almost wide awake.

"Mother, must we stay here another whole year?" was her first question.

"Yes, dear. We shall not move to the 'real house' till next May."

Phyllis drew a deep breath.

"I can bear it," she said firmly, "I really can bear it—*now*."

"I am glad to know that," murmured Mrs Harvey, tucking her more snugly up in bed. "It will help *me* to bear it too."